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THE WITTY AND HUMOROUS SIDE

OF

THE ENGLISH POETS.

LONDON:
ROBSON AND SONS, PRINTERS, PANCRAS ROAD, N.W.

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THE

WITTY AND HUMOROUS SIDE

OF THE

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WITTY AND HUMOROUS SIDE

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WITH A

VARIETY OF SPECIMENS ARRANGED IN PERIODS.

By ARTHUR H. ELLIOTT.

LONDON:
SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON, SEARLE, AND RIVINGTON,
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PREFACE.

THE object of the author of this volume has been a modest one. He has not attempted to write a full and complete history of English wit and humour as discovered in our poetry;—for that purpose several such volumes would have been required. But he has essayed to give a sketch, however rapid, of that history, illustrating his remarks by quotations designed at once to give pleasure in themselves and to convey an idea of the different styles of different writers. The author's hope is that this volume may be the means of inducing the reader to go more deeply into its fascinating subject. It can hardly be possible, he thinks, for any one to make acquaintance with extracts from the works of wits and humourists like Chaucer, Shakespeare, Dryden, Pope, Goldsmith, Cowper, and the rest, without yearning to render that acquaintance more close and intimate. This volume is offered, then, both as an inducement to further study, and as, in itself, a popular compendium; and it is hoped that it may prove acceptable and serviceable in both respects.

A. H. E.

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INTRODUCTION.

ON WIT AND HUMOUR GENERALLY.

The distinction between poetry and wit and humour—Wit and humour the product of the intellect—Leigh Hunt's definition of wit—Hazlitt's—Locke's—Addison's—Wit and humour analysed—The difference between them—Their characteristics—The forms in which they show themselves—Their essential properties.

INTRODUCTION.

ON WIT AND HUMOUR GENERALLY.

THE subject of this volume is described as the witty and humorous side of English poetry. Strictly speaking, however, we should not speak of poetry in this connection. Poetry is an affair of the emotions, whilst wit and humour are products of the intellect. Poetry is the offspring of the heart, whilst wit and humour are outcomes of the mind. Quotations will be made throughout this volume from the works of English poets, but the quotations themselves will in no sense be poetry. Verse, rather, is the term which ought in this instance to be used; and verse, because here we shall consider just that portion of our humorous and witty literature which has found rhythmical expression.

That wit and humour are, as they have been described, the products of the intellect alone is obvious on a consideration of their nature. For what is wit, and what is humour? Let us take the dicta of the two leading critics of the last generation, Hazlitt and Leigh Hunt, both of whom have left essays on the subject.

'Wit,' says Leigh Hunt, 'may be defined to be the arbitrary juxtaposition of dissimilar ideas, for some lively purpose of assimilation or contrast, generally of both. Wit,' he adds, 'does not contemplate its ideas for their own sakes in any light apart from their ordinary prosaical one, but solely for the purpose of producing an effect from their combination. Humour,' he remarks, 'is a tendency of the mind to run in particular directions of thought or feeling more amusing than accountable.' The one, it will be observed, is a juxtaposition of dissimilar ideas, the other is a tendency of the mind.

Hazlitt describes wit, 'as distinguished from poetry' (the very point we are desirous to insist on), as 'the imagination

or fancy inverted, and so applied to given objects as to make the little look less, the mean more light and worthless.' He does not give a definition of humour, except in contrasting it with wit; but it is obvious that he regards them both as the outcomes of an intellectual process.

And to go back further for authority, what does Locke say on the subject? 'Wit,' he tells us, lies 'most in the assemblage of ideas, and putting those together with quickness and variety, wherein can be found any resemblance or congruity, thereby to make up pleasant pictures and agreeable visions to the fancy.' Here again ideas are made the chief material of wit, as they are in the papers which Addison contributed to the *Spectator*, and in which he says: 'Every resemblance in the ideas is not that which we call wit, unless it be one that gives delight and surprise to the reader . . . particularly the last;' and again: 'It is necessary that the ideas should not lie too near one another in the nature of things; for where the likeness is obvious it gives no surprise.'

To particularise: 'Wit,' Leigh Hunt tells us, 'is the clash and reconcilement of incongruities; the meeting of extremes round a corner; the flashing of an artificial light from one object to another, disclosing some unexpected resemblance or connection. It is the detection of likeness in unlikeness, of sympathy in antipathy, or of the extreme points of antipathies themselves made friends by the very merriment of introduction. You may bring as many ideas together as can pleasantly assemble; but a single one is nothing. Two ideas are as necessary to wit as couples are to marriages.' 'Humour,' says the same writer, 'deals in incongruities of character and circumstance, as wit does in those of arbitrary ideas. The more the incongruities the better; but two, at any rate, are necessary to humour, as two ideas are to wit, and the more strikingly they differ, yet harmonise, the more amusing the result.' 'Humour,' says Hazlitt, 'is the describing the ludicrous as it is in itself; wit is the exposing it, by comparing it or contrasting it with something else. Humour is, as it were, the growth of nature and accident; wit is the product of art and fancy.'

It will be seen that wit and humour, which are frequently referred to as synonymous, or almost so, are very different things, with a different range of operation, and with different results. They may often mingle, or rather jostle one another, in talk or composition, but they are perfectly distinct in essence and in characteristics. Humour may be said to exist already in the very nature of men and of circumstances, and has only to be brought out by those who are capable of discerning it. Wit, on the other hand, is a conscious and deliberate exercise of the mental faculties in the direction of distinguishing the ludicrous connection between diverse things. The one is a case of discovery and of conjunction; the other of sympathy and of exposition. The one is a matter of rapidity and point; the other of exaggeration and accumulation. The one flashes keenly and decisively upon a subject; the other plays round it, and above it, and beneath it, with an enjoyment it is impossible to conceal. The one is too frequently inimical in its action and mordant in its effects; the other is generally kindly in its manner and innocuous in its results. The one is the instrument of satire, the other the weapon of mere persiflage.

As for the forms in which wit and humour show themselves, it would be absurd to lay down arbitrary rules. The fact is, their range is commensurate with the range of intellect: no subject is sacred to them, no time is impossible for them, no circumstances are beyond them. Their possibilities are boundless, their actualities have been legion. They have existed from the beginning, and will go on to the end. The only boundaries you can set to them are those which are suggested by their separate peculiarities. Wit, which consists primarily in point, favours the pun, the epigram, the satire (which is but a series of connected epigrams), and all other forms in which conciseness of expression is the first requirement. Humour, which consists primarily in exaggeration, favours the burlesque (of generalities), the parody (of particularities), the mock heroic, the absolutely nonsensical, the wild extravagances of rhyme and rhythm; all forms, in fact, in which accumulation is the leading feature. There may, of course, be wit occa-

sionally in parody, and humour occasionally in epigram: these two qualities are of such a Protean character that it is not always possible to seize upon them and chain them down to their appointed work. Still, as a rule, the limits we have indicated are the limits within which wit and humour usually move, and in which their effects are not only most legitimate, but greatest.

In the following pages no attempt will be made arbitrarily to separate the wits and humorists, and range them in their different categories; and this will be so for the simple reason that a wit has often been a humorist, and a humorist has often been a wit. The arrangement adopted will be, as nearly as possible, chronological, and will have the effect of tracing and exhibiting the ramifications of wit and humour through the English verse of several centuries. It will be seen that, though the forms in which they appear differ according to individual idiosyncrasies and the intellectual fashions of each epoch, true wit and true humour are essentially the same from whatever person and whatever epoch they proceed; that the quality of Chaucer's humour and of Shakespeare's wit is perennial in its nature; and that the humour of Butler and the wit of Pope are as intelligible to and enjoyable by us as the wit of Byron and the humour of James and Horace Smith. So far, the chronological order of treatment is not of much importance; yet, on the other hand, it will enable us to note the gradual deepening and broadening of the channels of the national work in wit and humour—to mark, how, from the comparatively meagre beginnings in the fourteenth century, have proceeded the fine performances of later times, when, if we have fewer great wits and humorists than there were in former days, we have a more widespread sense of what is humorous and witty, and a greater number of possessors of the true *vis comica*. If there were giants in those times, at least we may say of our own century that the general standard of the men is higher than it ever was before; that if the leaders are less magnificent in their proportions, the rank and file have a length and breadth of limb to which their ancestors had no pretensions.

CHAPTER I.

CHAUCER TO SHAKESPEARE.

English humour before the Conquest—After the Conquest—'The Land of Cockaygne'—William Langland—Langland compared with Chaucer—Their difference of purpose—Of style—Of character—'The Canterbury Tales'—Chaucer 'To his Empty Purse'—Lydgate—'London Lickpenny'—Skelton—His attack on Wolsey—Sir Thomas More—The first English epigram—A 'Merry Jest'—Sir Thomas Wyatt—His satires—Henry, Earl of Surrey—Andrew Borde—Nicholas Udall—'I mun be married a Sunday'—John Heywood—His epigrams—George Gascoigne—'The Steel Glass'—Thomas Tusser—'Thrift and Unthrift'—'Jolly Good Ale and Old'—Dunbar—'Tidings fra the Session'—Alexander Barclay—'The Ship of Fools'—Sir David Lyndsay—'The Three Estates'—'Side Tails'—Sir Richard Maitland—'Town Ladies.'

CHAPTER I.

CHAUCER TO SHAKESPEARE.

We begin with Chaucer, not because there was no humour in English verse before his time, but because it is in the pages of our first great poet that English humour first becomes intelligible, without the aid of elaborate glossaries and notes.

It may be taken for granted that the vigorous, coarse humour of our countrymen early began to make itself noticeable in their popular satires. We know that this was so after the Conquest, and we may be sure it was so in the days previous to that event. At least, we may well conceive that those favourite subjects of ridicule—the clergy and things clerical—did not escape observation in the days of Dunstan any more than they escaped it in the days of Wolsey.

It is certainly suggestive of the general tone and character of English popular satire that the earliest extant specimen of English humour should be in the form of a diatribe, not, indeed, against the clergy, but against the Consistory Courts, which at one time pressed heavily upon the peasantry. It shows that if it be true that the poets as a body 'learn in suffering what they teach in song,' the saying is specially true of the genuine poets of the people, who were first roused to utterance in rhyme and rhythm by their sense of the wrongs that weighed upon the lower classes.

It is curious, also, that the second extant specimen of English humour should be in the form of a satirical ballad on the battle of Lewes, written in the interests of De Montfort, and making merry over the King of the Romans, who is represented as mistaking the windmill to which he retreated for a fortification, and the sails of it for military

engines. Here, again, the wit and humour are on the side of the liberties of the people.

The earliest extant satire on the monks seems to date from the last years of the thirteenth century. It is in description of a certain land called 'Cockaygne,' which is pictured as a place of indolence and luxury. The clergy there are said to live in a monastery constructed of all sorts of luscious viands. The writer tells us that

> There is a well fair abbey
> Of white monks and grey;
> There be bowers and halls;
> All of pasties be the walls,
> Of flesh and fish and rich meat,
> The likefullest that man may eat.
> Flower cakes be the shingles [tiles] all
> Of church, cloister, bower, and hall.
> The pinnacles be fat puddings,
> Rich meat to princes and to kings.

The riches of the monks are allegorised in the surroundings of the abbey, as in wells from which there flow all kinds of precious gems. The satire is never very pungent, but it is interesting as the beginnings of a literature in which the vices of the clergy and of clericalism in the Middle Ages were more scathingly stated and attacked.

The first important item of that literature is the *Vision of William concerning Piers the Plowman*, written, it would seem, by one William Langland, between the years 1362 and 1390. That is to say, there are in existence three texts of the poem, which would appear to have been composed respectively in or about 1362, 1377, and 1380-90. So far, Langland may be regarded as the predecessor of Chaucer, whose *Canterbury Tales* were not written till about 1387; but, otherwise, it should be noted that the poets were contemporaries, Chaucer being born in 1328, and Langland about 1332; Chaucer dying in 1400, and Langland a little while before or after.

There is but little in common between the two. Langland's great poem is didactic from beginning to end; it has

an earnest purpose, and is forcible in its tone. It is not revolutionary in the sense of being a direct onslaught upon authority. On the contrary, the writer was evidently a devout adherent of the Church and loyal vassal of the King; he belongs to the school of moderate reform, and of reform, if possible, from within. He reveres the clergy as a body, but he laments the scandals that have gathered round that body; he inveighs against the hardships of the law, but he is careful not to agitate for its overthrowal. He beseeches and implores, is sarcastic and ironical, but his prayers and sarcasms are alike those of a man who wishes to modify, not to uproot. When he desires to satirise the tendency of the bishops of his time to be great lords, temporal as well as spiritual, he does it in this way:

> And now is religion a rider, a roamer by streets,
> A leader of love-days, and a land-bugger;
> A pricker on palfrey from manor to manor,
> A heap of hounds at his heels as he a lord were;
> And but if his knave kneel that shall his cup bring,
> He lowereth on him and asketh him who taught him courtesy?

The above passage happens to be one which can be easily understood in the original. As a rule, however, Langland's English is much more difficult of comprehension than that of Chaucer. It is not that the former writer does not use the same vocabulary as the latter; he does, but he was a Midland county man, and his provincial origin breaks out occasionally in provincial words and turns of style. Chaucer, on the other hand, was emphatically a poet of the court, and wrote that the cultivated class might read. He wrote, too, in a very different strain from Langland. It is easy to see that life for Langland was very different from what it was for Chaucer. The one was poor and obscure; the other, if not rich, had at least wealthy patrons, and moved in the same atmosphere as the great. More than this, the poets were essentially distinct in character: Chaucer was at heart, no doubt, as sincere a reformer as his contemporary, but he looked on human nature with a

more tolerant and kindly eye. Langland is a satirist rather than a humorist; Chaucer a humorist rather than a satirist. His humour is satirical, but it is genial. You can see that in his descriptions of the Canterbury Pilgrims. They are all touched to the life, but it is with the hand of sympathy, not of reproach. The poet laughs as he puts his fingers on the various weak places of his fellow-creatures. He extenuates nothing, but he puts nothing down in malice, or, if in malice, it is still with a twinkle of the eye. The fun he pokes at the young Squire, for example, is essentially good-tempered: there is no indignation in his reference to the

> Lockës crull as they were laid in press;

nor in the lines where he describes him as

> Embroidered, as it were a mead
> All full of freshë flowers, white and rede.

The Prioress is treated with the same careful tenderness:

> Full well she sangë the service divine,
> Entunëd in her nose full swetëly.
> And French she spake full fair and fetisly,
> After the school of Stratford-attë-Bowe,
> For French of Paris was to her unknowe.

If it were necessary to characterise Chaucer's humour in one word, it might be described as sly. Slyness is essentially the air with which, when describing the 'Sergeant of the Law,' Chaucer says:

> No where so busy a man as he there n'as,
> And yet he seemëd busier than he was.

In reading the *Canterbury Tales* you call up the picture of a shrewd but hearty man, who sees clearly through the foibles of his fellows, but has not the energy or the desire to chastise them. He would wish them otherwise, but in the mean time he contents himself with laughing at them.

Unfortunately, it would be impossible thoroughly to illustrate the humour of the *Tales* without quoting one of them *in extenso*, for it is only by taking them as wholes

that you can gain a fair notion of their interest and value. Like all humorists, Chaucer required room to work in, and no mere extract can give an adequate conception of his manner.

Perhaps the best specimen that can be given in this place is his address 'To his Empty Purse:'

To you, my purse, and to none other wight
  Complain I, for you be my lady dear.
I am sorry now that you be light,
  For certes you now make me heavy cheer.
  Me were as liefè laid upon a bier,
For which unto your mercy thus I cry:
Be heavy again, or else must I die.

Now vouchsafe this day, or it be night,
  That I of you the blissful sound may hear,
Or see your colour like the sunnè bright,
  That of yellowness had never peer.
  You be my life, you be my heartès stere,
Queen of comfòrt and of good company;
Be heavy again, or else must I die.

Now, purse, that art to me as my life's light
  And saviour, as down in this world here,
Out of this town help me by your might,
  Since that you will not be my treasure,
  For I am shaved as near as any frere;
But I pray unto your courtesie,
Be heavy again, or else must I die.

This has been happily modernised by several writers, but only requires a very slight literal (not even verbal) alteration to be quite intelligible as the poet wrote it.

Lydgate's contributions to the sum of English wit and humour were not numerous, nor were they very remarkable.* His chief poem was intended for an additional

* John Lydgate was born in 1375, and died in 1460. His *Falls of Princes* was printed in 1494, his *History of Troy* in 1513, and his *Story of Thebes* in 1561.

'Canterbury Tale,' but has no claim to rank so high. Lydgate is, indeed, best in his least ambitious productions, among the most successful of which is the poem called 'London Lickpenny.' This recounts the adventures in London of a man whose purse, like Chaucer's, was an empty one, and is a series of satirical comments on the inconvenience of being poor. The meaning of the title is disputed, some thinking that it ought to be read 'London Lackpenny,' and that it is the hero of the poem to whom the latter word applies—that it is he who, being poor, lacks pence. A better explanation, surely, is that which preserves the title 'London Lickpenny,' and applies the latter word to the metropolis, which, in its greed, licks up the pence of rich and poor alike. Here, at any rate, are a few of Lydgate's verses:

To London once my steps I bent,
  Where truth in no wise should be faint;
To Westminster-ward I forthwith went,
  To a man of law to make complaint;
  I said, 'For Mary's love, that holy saint!
Pity the poor that would proceed;'
But for lack of money I could not speed [thrive].

And as I thrust the press among,
  By froward chance my hood was gone,
Yet for all that I stayed not long,
  Till to the King's Bench I was come.
  Before the judge I kneeled anon,
And prayed him for God's sake to take heed,
But for lack of money I might not speed.

Beneath them sat clerks a great rout,
  Which fast did write with one assent;
There stood up one and cried about,
  'Richard, Robert, and John of Kent.'
  I wist not well what this man meant,
He cried so thickè there indeed;
But he that lacked money might not speed.

Unto the Common Pleas I yode [went] too,
  Where sat one with a silken hood;

I did him reverence, for I ought to do so,
  And told my case as well as I could,
  How my goods were defrauded me by falsehood.
I got not a mum of his mouth for my meed,
And for lack of money I might not speed.

Unto the Rolls I gat me from thence,
  Before the clerks of the Chancery,
Where many I found earning of pence,
  But none at all once regarded me.
  I gave them my plaint upon my knee;
They liked it well when they had it read:
But, lacking money, I could not speed. . . .

Then to Westminster-gate I presently went,
  When the sunnè was at highè prime;
Cookès to me took good intent,
  And proferred me bread, with ale and wine,
  Ribs of beef, both fat and full fine.
A fair cloth they gan for to sprede;
But, wanting money, I might not then speed. . . .

Then into Cornhill anon I yode,
  Where was much stolen gear among;
I saw where hung mine ownè hood,
  That I had lost among the throng:
  To buy my own hood I thought it wrong,
I knew it well as I did my creed,
But for lack of money I could not speed.

The taverner took me by the sleeve,
  'Sir,' saith he, 'will you our wine assay?'
I answered, 'That can not much me grieve:
  A penny can do no more than may;'
  I drank a pint and for it did pay;
Yet sore a-hungered from thence I yede,
And, wanting money, I could not speed. . . .

Then I conveyed me into Kent,
  For of the law would I meddle no more;
Because no man to me took intent,

I dight [prepared] me to do as I did before.
Now Jesus that in Bethlem was bore,
Save London, and send true lawyers their meed!
For whoso wants money with them shall not speed!

Lydgate lived in the generation after Chaucer; Skelton in the generation after Lydgate. Skelton* was a cleric by profession, and might perhaps have risen in the Church but for the virulence as well as volubility of his satires, some of which he dared to point against no less puissant a personage than Cardinal Wolsey. He was a very voluminous writer, and is remarkable for the ease of his rhymes, and the rapid uninterrupted flow of his vigorous, if not elegant, verse. His most effective poem is perhaps *Why come ye not to Court?* from which the following lines on Wolsey are extracted:

Once yet again
Of you I would frayne [ask]—
Why come ye not to court?
To which court?
To the king's court,
Or to Hampton Court?† . . .
The king's court
Should have the excellence,
But Hampton Court
Hath the preëminence,
And York's Place,‡
With my lord's grace,
To whose magnificence
Is all the confluence,
Suits and supplications,
Embassies of all nations.
Straw for law canon,
Or for the law common,
Or for law civil!
It shall be as he will: . . .

* Died in 1529; author of *Magnificence*, *The Bouge of Court*, *Philip Sparrow*, *Speak Parrot*, &c.
† Wolsey's residence.
‡ Another of Wolsey's residences.

Be it sour, be it sweet,
His wisdom is so discreet,
That in a fume or a heat—
'Warden of the Fleet,
Set him fast by the feet!'
And of his royal power
When him list to lower,
Then, 'Have him to the Tower,
Sans autre remedy!
Have him forth by and by
To the Marshalsea,
Or to the King's Bench!'
He diggeth so in the trench
Of the court royal,
That he ruleth them all. . . .
He beareth the king on hand
That he must pill his land,
To make his coffers rich;
But he layeth all in the ditch,
And useth such abusion,
That in the conclusion
All cometh to confusion.
Perceive the cause why,
To tell the truth plainly,
He is so ambitious,
So shameless and so vicious,
And so superstitious,
And so much oblivious
From whence that he came,
That he falleth into a *cæciam*,
Which, truly to express,
Is a forgetfulness,
Or wilful blindness. . . .
He regardeth lords
No more than potsherds;
He is in such elation
Of his exaltation
And the supportacion

Of our sovereign lord,
That, God to record,
He ruleth all at will,
Without reason or skill:
How be it the primordial
Of his wretched original,
And his base progeny,
And his greasy genealogy,
He came of the *sang royal*,
That was cast out of a butcher's stall.

There is no polish in these lines; there is scarcely any wit and hardly any humour; but they have a rushing flow of indignation that gives them force, and makes them effective in their way. Altogether, Skelton was one of the most fluent of our early writers, and did much to enlarge the vocabulary of our language.

The author of *Why came ye not to Court?* had a rival, so far as wit and humour go, in his famous contemporary, Sir Thomas More, who chiefly lives in literature in his *Utopia*. It is not, perhaps, generally known that he possessed considerable powers of satire, apart from those which are displayed in his great work, and are visible in certain scraps of English verse. He wrote *Utopia* in Latin, but his writings in his native tongue were fairly numerous, and are still interesting.* They are chiefly in prose, and usually polemical, but some examples of his verse are still extant. Among these is what Warton called 'the first pointed English epigram' that he remembered, and which he said deserved to be admitted into modern collections of that popular species of poetry:

A student, at his book so plast [earnest]
That wealth he might have won,
From book to wife did fleet in haste,
From wealth to woe to run.

Now, who hath played a feater cast,
Since juggling first begun?

* They were collected and published in 1557, and include his *History of Edward V. and Richard III.* and *Dialogue concerning Heresies.*

In knitting of himself so fast
Himself he hath undone.

This may be taken as a specimen of Sir Thomas's wit. The quality of his humour may be gathered from this extract from his 'Merry Jest how a Sergeant would learn to be a Friar:'

He hath left the hosier's craft,
And fall to making shoon;
The smith that shall to painting fall,
His thrift is well-nigh done.
A black draper, with white paper
To go to writing-school,
An old butler, become a cutler,
I ween shall prove a fool. . . .
A man of law that never saw
The ways to buy and sell,
Wening to rise by merchandise,
I pray God speed him well!
A merchant eke, that will go seek
By all the means he may,
To fall in suit till he dispute
His money clean away;
Pleading the law for every straw,
Shall prove a thrifty man
With bate and strife; but by my life
I cannot tell you whan. . . .

The object here, as Warton kindly tells us, is to illustrate by familiar examples the absurdity of a tipstaff assuming the disguise and air of a friar.

More was beheaded in 1535, and seven years after was followed to the grave by Sir Thomas Wyatt the elder—the courtier and poet whom Tennyson has so beautifully celebrated in *Queen Mary*.* 'Courtier of many courts,' he

* See act ii. scene 1:

Courtier of many courts, he loved the more
His own gray towers, plain life and lettered peace,
To read and rhyme in solitary fields,
The lark above, the nightingale below,
And answer them in song.

nevertheless despised the life that he was forced to live, and has attacked it in one of the few Satires (three only in number) that he wrote.* He there says of it:

Mine own John Poins, since you delight to know
  The causes why that homeward I me draw,
And fly the press of courts. . . .
  My Poins, I cannot frame my time to feign,
To cloak the truth, for praise without desert
  Of them that list all vice for to retain.
I cannot honour them that set their part
  With Venus and Bacchùs, all their life long. . . .
I cannot with my words complain and moan,
  And suffer nought; nor smart without complaint;
Nor turn the words that from my mouth is gone.
  I cannot speak and look like as a saint,
    Use wiles for wit, and make deceit a pleasure;
Call craft counsel, for lucre still to pant.
  I cannot wrest the law to fill the coffer,
With innocent blood to feed myselfè fat,
  And do most hurt, where that most help I offer. . . .
I am not he, such eloquence to boast,
  To make the crow in singing as the swan;
Nor call the lion of coward beasts the most,
  That cannot take a mouse, as the cat can; . . .
Praise him for counsel that is drunk of ale;
  Grin when he laughs that beareth all the sway;
Frown when he frowns, and groan when he is pale;
  An other's lusts to hang both night and day.
    None of these points would ever frame in me,
My wit is nought, I cannot learn the way . . .
  As, drunkenness 'good fellowship' to call;
That friendly foe with his fair double face,
  Say, he is gentle and courteous there withal; . . .
Say he is rude that cannot lie and feign, . . .
  And tyranny
To be the true right of a prince's reign.
  I cannot, I; no, no, it will not be.

* Printed in *Tottel's Miscellany.*

This is rude, like Skelton's work, but, also like Skelton's work, forcible and vigorous—in a strain of earnest satire, of which it is one of the earliest examples in the language.

Wyatt was fortunate enough to escape the fate that had befallen More before him, and that befel Lord Surrey after him. The latter, who was beheaded in 1547, figures with Wyatt and others in *Tottel's Miscellany*, and will always be remembered as the introducer of blank verse among our English metres. He can scarcely be termed a humourist; yet there is at least a touch of humour in the opening lines of 'How no Age is content with his Own Estate:'

Laid in my quiet bed, in study as I were,
I saw, within my troubled head, a heap of thoughts appear,
And every thought did show so lively in my eyes,
That now I sighed, and then I smiled, as cause of thought doth rise.
I saw a little boy in thought, how oft that he
Did wish of God, to 'scape the rod, a tall young man to be.
The young man eke, that feels his bones with pains opprest,
How he would be a rich old man, to live and lie at rest.
The rich old man that sees his end draw on so fore,
How he would be a boy again, to live so much the more.
Whereat full oft I smiled, to see how all these three,
From boy to man, from man to boy, would chop and change degree.

Andrew Borde, by a strange irony of fate, seems likely to go down to posterity rather as the man through whom the phrase of 'Merry Andrew' originated, than as the author of amusing tales and learned dietaries. Yet he was accounted in his time a witty writer, and has left works which are certainly valuable for the light they throw on the manners and customs of his time. One of his most interesting performances is his *First Book of the Introduction of Knowledge*, from which the following passages are taken. First we have the Englishman speaking *in propriâ personâ:*

I am an Englishman, and naked I stand here,
Musing in my mind what garment I shall wear,

For now I will wear this and now I will wear that,
Now I will wear I cannot tell what:
All new fashions be pleasant to me,
I will have them whether I strive or thee: . . .
I do fear no man, each man feareth me,
I overcome my adversaries by land and by sea:
I had no peer if to myself I were true;
Because I am not so, divers times do I rue: . . .
But I have such matters rolling in my pate,
That I will and do—I cannot tell what . . .
Yet above all things new fashions I love well,
And to wear them my thrift I will sell.

Then we have the Irishman:

I am an Irishman, in Ireland I was born;
I love to wear a saffron shirt, although it be to-torn.
My anger and my hastiness doth hurt me full sore;
I cannot leave it, it 'creaseth more and more;
And, although I be poor, I have an angry heart,
I can keep a hobby, a garden, and a cart; . . .
I do love to eat my meat, sitting upon the ground,
And do lie in oaten straw, sleeping full sound. . . .
I do use no pot to seeth my meat in,
Wherefore I do boil it in a beast's skin.
Then, after my meat, the broth I do drink up;
I care not for my master, neither cruse nor cup.
I am not new-fangled, nor never will be;
I do live in poverty, in my own countree.

Here we have the Welshman:

I am a Welshman, and do dwell in Wales,
I have loved to search budgets and to look in mails; . . .
I am a gentleman, and came of Brute's blood,
My name is Ap Reece, Ap Davy, Ap Flood: . . .
And if I have my harp I care for no more,
It is my treasure, I keep it in store. . . .
My song and my voice and my harp doth agree,
Much like the buzzing of a humble bee.

Thus are natives of the various European countries made to

describe the peculiarities of themselves and fellows. The amount of humour is infinitesimal; but the historic usefulness of the descriptions is not small. What Borde's notion of wit was we may gather from the fact that he was wont jocosely to sign himself 'Andreas Perforatus.' He seems to have been really a funny fellow, and to have justified in his daily life, if not in his books, the epithet which fame has added to his name.*

We now come to the writer to whom belongs the distinction of having composed the first regular comedy in English.† Udall was largely indebted to his models, Plautus and Terence; yet his work is, nevertheless, so original in form and matter that he must be credited with no mean powers, both of construction and execution. The comedy is in verse throughout, with a song or two sprinkled here and there; as in the following instance, when the lines are sung by Ralph Roister Doister himself:

I mun be married a Sunday,
I mun be married a Sunday;
Who soever shall come that way,
I mun be married a Sunday.

Roister Doister is my name,
Roister Doister is my name;
A lusty brute I am the same;
I mun be married a Sunday.

Christian Custance have I found,
Christian Custance have I found;
A widow worth a thousand pound;
I mun be married a Sunday.

Custance is as sweet as honey,
Custance is as sweet as honey;
I her lamb, and she my coney;
I mun be married a Sunday.

* The *First Book* appeared in 1542. Borde was borne about 1500, and died in 1549. Among his best works may be named *The Breviary of Health* (1547), *The Compendious Regimen, or Dietary* (1562), and *Merry Tales of the Mad Men of Gotham* (1565).

† *Ralph Roister Doister.* Udall also wrote a sacred drama called *Ezechias* (1564), and published various translations from the Latin.

When we shall make our wedding feast,
When we shall make our wedding feast,
There shall be cheer for man and beast;
I mun be married a Sunday.
I mun be married a Sunday.

This has a certain rude native vigour about it, and shows, too, what it was that audiences in the first half of the sixteenth century—the comedy was played between 1534 and 1541—approved of in the way of humorous song. There are many really amusing passages in the comedy; as, for example, the letter which Ralph sends to Dame Christian, and which is complimentary, or the reverse, according to the manner of the punctuation.

The comedies of John Heywood*. are less favourable specimens than Udall's effort; they have all the latter's buffoonery and horseplay, and none of his occasionally genuine humour. For Heywood's happiest work the reader must needs go to his book of epigrams, a form of verse of which he was the earliest cultivator in this country. Not many, doubtless, of the thoughts are his: he was an accomplished borrower, and did little in many cases but versify the wit of others. Still, a certain proportion of his epigrams may fairly be accounted his invention, and are sufficient to make good his title to distinction.† His wit is, of course, as rude and as unpolished as is Udall's humour. Thus:

'I drink to thee, Tom.' 'Nay, thou drinkest *from* me, John,
For when thou drinkest *to* me, drink thou leavest none.'

Also, on the then fashion of wearing farthingales:

Alas, poor farthingales must lie in the street,
To house them no door in the city made meet;
Since at our narrow doors they in cannot win,
Send them to Oxford, at Broadgates to get in.

One of Heywood's performances—besides his epigrams,

* Born 1506, died 1565; and author of more than one 'merry play.'
† The epigrams seem to have been published collectively for the first time in 1562.

his plays, and his tedious poem of 'The Spider and the Fly'—was the collection of all the proverbs in the English language, in the form of what Warton calls 'a very silly comic tale.'

Contemporary with Borde, Udall, and Heywood, was George Gascoigne,* whose *Steel Glass*, published in 1576, is remarkable as the first English satire in blank verse. It is earnest in its tone, and singularly forcible in style. Its general character may be judged from the following vigorous and well-sustained passage:

But here, methinks, my priests begin to frown,
And one I hear, more saucy than the rest,
Which asketh me, 'Where shall our prayers end?'
I tell thee, priest: When shoemakers make shoes
That are well sewed, with never a stitch amiss,
And use no craft in altering of the same;
When tailors steal no stuff from gentlemen;
When tanners are with curriers well agreed,
And both so dress their hides that we go dry;
When cutlers leave to sell old rusty blades,
And hide no cracks with solder and deceit;
When tinkers make no more holes than they found,
When colliers put no dust into their sacks,
When malters make us drink no fermenty, . . .
When smiths shoe horses as they should be shod, . . .
When brewers put no baggage in their beer, . . .
When vinters mix no water with their wine,
When printers pass no errors in their books, . . .
When pewterers infest no tin with lead, . . .
When surgeons heal all wounds without delay, . . .
When all these things are ordered as they ought,
Even then, my priests, may you make holiday.

How often, since George Gascoigne wrote these lines, have English satirists adopted just the same device for bringing together, in powerful array, a series of similar impossibilities! How true it is that we have been anticipated in our best things by those *qui ante nos dixerunt!*

* 1530-1577. His works were collected in 1589.

It is, we fear, only by stretching the word humour to its very widest extent that we can include Thomas Tusser,* the famous author of the *Five Hundred Points of Good Husbandry*, among the humorists. He was shrewd, but that is all; his verse is generally didactic—sometimes it is quite solemn in its tone. In his contrast between 'Good Husbandry and Ill,' he is smart, perhaps, but scarcely more than that—if that:

Ill husbandry loseth,
  For lack of good fence;
Good husbandry closeth,
  And gaineth the pence.

Ill husbandry trusteth
  To him and to her;
Good husbandry lusteth
  Himself for to stir.

Ill husbandry eateth
  Himself out of door;
Good husbandry meateth
  His friend and the poor. . . .

Ill husbandry taketh,
  And spendeth up all;
Good husbandry maketh
  Good shift with a small.

To the period of our literature now under review belongs the well-known song of 'Jolly Good Ale and Old,' a portion of which we give in the version printed by the Rev. Alexander Dyce. This version, which its editor attributes to a date earlier than 1575, differs from the song as it appears in Bishop Still's comedy of *Gammer Gurton*, printed for the first time in that year. And it differs from it in not including a verse which alludes to a character in the comedy, a circumstance which would lead one to suppose that Still was not the author of the song, but simply adapted it for his play. Whoever was the author of the piece, it is certainly most humorous in strain and easy in style:

* Born 1515, died 1580. His chief work appeared in 1557.

Back and side, go bare, go bare!
  Both hand and foot, go cold!
But, belly, God send thee good ale enough,
  Whether it be new or old!

But if that I may have truly
  Good ale my belly full,
I shall look like one, by sweet Saint John,
  Were shorn against the wool.
Though I go bare, take you no care,
  I am nothing cold,
I stuff my skin so full within
  Of jolly good ale and old.
    Back and side, &c.

I cannot eat but little meat,
  My stomach is not good;
But sure I think that I could drink
  With him that weareth an hood.
Drink is my life, although my wife
  Sometime do chide and scold;
Yet spare I not to ply the pot
  Of jolly good ale and old.
    Back and side, &c.

I love no roast, but a brown toast,
  Or a crab in the fire;
A little bread shall do me stead,—
  Much bread I never desire.
Nor frost nor snow, nor wind, I trow,
  Can hurt me if I wold;
I am so wrapped within and lapped
  With jolly good ale and old.
    Back and side, &c.

I care right nought, I take no thought
  For clothes to keep me warm;
Have I good drink, I surely think
  Nothing can do me harm.
For truly than I fear no man,
  Be he never so bold,

When I am armed and thoroughly warmed
With jolly good ale and old.
Back and side, &c. . . .

They that do drink till they nod and wink,
Even as good fellows should do,
They shall not miss to have that bliss
That good ale hath brought them to.
And all poor souls that scour black bowls,
And them that lustily trolled,
God save the lives of them and their wives,
Whether they be young or old!
Back and side, &c.

Warton gives 1551 as the date at which this song was written, and, if he is correct, the composition is singularly in advance, in merit as well as in time, of much that was written within fifty years afterwards. It has a lilt and a swing and a freedom from obscurity not always visible in work which, if Warton is to believed, was contemporary with it.

To this period, also, belong the celebrated names of the Scotch poets, Dunbar, Barclay, Lyndsay, and Maitland.

William Dunbar* has been designated by Sir Walter Scott as 'unrivalled' among northern writers. He is certainly the most considerable man produced by Scotland before Burns. His *Thistle and the Rose* is full of genuine poetry, whilst his *Golden Terge* is marked by great imaginative power. *The Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins* is very striking, but didactic rather than humorous in its satire. The most amusing work of Dunbar's comic muse was his 'Twa Married Women and the Widow,' a work in which, however, the fun is far too gross for reproduction here; nor is the dialect easily comprehensible. Even the following lines (from 'Tidings fra the Session') have to be slightly annotated before they can be quite 'understanded' by the modern reader. Their subject is very similar to that of 'London Lickpenny,' with which they may be profitably compared:

* Born 1465, died 1530; works ed. by Hailes (1770) and Laing (1824).

Ane muirland man, of upland make,
At hame thus to his neighbour spake:
'What tidings, gossip, peace or weir [war]?'
The other rounit [whispered] in his ear:
'I tell you under this confession,
But lately lichtit [alighted] off my meare [mare];
I come of Edinburgh fra the Session.'

'What tidings heard you there, I pray you?'
The t'other answerit, 'I sall tell you:
Keep well this secret, gentle brother;
Is na man there that trusts another:
Ane common doer of transgression
Of common folk preveens a futher:*
Sic tidings heard I at the Session.

'Some with his fellow rouns him to please,
That wald for envy bite off his nese [nose];
His fa' some by the oxter [armpit] leads;
Some patten with his mouth on beads,
That has his mind all on oppression;
Some becks full law and shaws bare heads,
Wad look full heigh were not the Session.

'Some, bydand the law, lays land in wed [pledge];
Some, super-expended, goes to bed;
Some speeds, for he in court has means;
Some of partiality compleens
How feid [feud] and favour flemis [bans] discretion;
Some speaks full fair and falsely feigns;
Sic tidings heard I at the Session. . . .

'Some swearis and forsakis God;
Some in ane lamb's-skin is ane tod [fox];
Some in his tongue his kindness turses [carries];
Some cuts throats, and some pykes purses;
Some goes to gallows with procession;
Some sains the seat, and some them curses:
Sic tidings heard I at the Session.'

* Is advanced before a great number.

Barclay's great work was his *Ship of Fools*, which is partly original and partly a translation or adaptation from the German of Sebastian Brandt.* The ship in question is supposed to be manned by fools of every kind, who are passed in review by the satirist, and described with a certain amount of pungency. As in several other early satires, the individuals satirised are made to discuss their own peculiarities, and condemn themselves out of their own mouths. Thus, the book-worm is made to say:

> Still am I busy books assembling;
> For to have plenty is a pleasant thing
> In my conceit [opinion], and to have them aye in hand:
> But what they mean I do not understand.
>
> But yet I have them in great reverence
> And honour, saving them from filth and ordure,
> By often brushing and much diligence.
> Full goodly bound in pleasant coverture
> Of damask, satin, or else of velvet pure.
> I keep them sure, fearing lest they should be lost;
> For in them is the cunning wherein I me boast.
>
> . . . Of books I have store,
> But few I read, and fewer understand.
> I follow not their doctrine or their lore,
> It is enough to bear a book in hand:
> It were too much to be in such a band,
> For to be bound to look within the book:
> I am content on the fair covering to look.

The satire is all of this description. Hypocrisy is everywhere exposed in a manner which to us is now very trite, yet with a vigour which is creditable to the writer, who drew largely upon his observations among his fellow-countrymen, and has bequeathed to us many useful pictures of his times.

There is satire in all Sir David Lyndsay's work,† but it

* That Barclay was a Scotchman is evident from the statement of one of his contemporaries, who says he was born 'beyond the cold river of Tweed.' He died in 1552.

† Lyndsay died in 1557. The 'Satire' appeared in 1535.

is most forcible and effective in his morality called *A Satire on the Three Estates*, in which he lashes the monarchy, the aristocracy, and the clergy with considerable freedom, and, it must be added, grossness. The writer glances incidentally at many other abuses of his time, notably at the 'law's delay,' which, as we have seen, was a favourite subject of animadversion by mediæval writers. Thus does one of the characters complain:

Marry, I lent my gossip my mare to fetch hame coals,
And he her drounit into the quarry holes;
And I ran to the Consistory, for to pleinzie [complain];
And there I happenit amang ane greedie meinzie [lot];
They gave first ane thing they call *citendum;*
Within aucht [eight] days I gat but *libellandum;*
Within ane month I gat *ad opponendum;*
In half ane year I gat *inter-loquendum,*
And syne [afterwards] I gat—how call ye it?—*ad replicandum;*
But I could never ane word yet understand him:
And then they gart [made] me cast out many placks,*
And gart me pay for four-and-twenty acts;
But or they came half gate to *concludendum,*
The fiend ane plack was left for to defend him.
Thus they postponed me twa year with their train,
Syne, *hodie ad octo,* bad me come again:
And then their rooks they roupit [shouted] wonder fast
For sentence, silver, they cryit at the last.
Of *pronunciandum* they made me wonder fain,
But I gat never my gude gray mare again.

A characteristic specimen of Lyndsay's style is his 'Supplication directed to the King's Grace, in contemption of Side Tails,' *i.e.* long dresses. It would appear that the ladies of that era were as greatly addicted as the ladies of later times to the wearing of superfluous skirts, and that the indignation of Sir David was greatly roused thereby. He did not object to the lengthy robes of the king or queen or bishops,—for these were necessary to support their dignity,

* A Scotch coin of that time, equivalent to about a third of a penny.

—but he saw no reason why ordinary women should adopt the custom:

Howbeit they been of high estate,
The Queen they should nocht counterfeit.
Wherever they go it may be seen
How kirk and causay they soof [sweep] clean.
The images into the kirk
May think of their side taillis irk [annoyance];
For when the weather been maist fair,
The dust flies highest in the air,
And all their faces does begarie [smear].
Gif they could speak, they wald them warie [curse]. . . .
But I have maist into depite
Poor claggocks [draggletails] clad in raplock white,
Whilk has scant twa merks for their fees,
Will have twa ells beneath their knees.
Kittock that cleckit [hatched] was yestreen,
The morn, will counterfeit the queen:
And Moorland Meg, that milked the yowes,
Claggit with clay aboon the hows,
In barn nor byre she will not bide
Without her kirtle-tail be syde.
In burghs, wanton burgess wives,
Wha may have sydest tailis strives,
Weel borderèd with velvet fine,
But followand them it is ane pyne:
In summer, when the streetis dries,
They raise the dust aboon the skies.
Nane may gae near them at their ease,
Without they cover mouth and neeze. . . .
I think maist pane after ane rain,
To see them tuckit up again;
Then, when they step furth through the street,
Their fauldings flaps about their feet;
They waste mair claith, within few years,
Nor wald clad fifty score of freirs.*

Curiously enough, we find Sir Richard Maitland, who

* Lindsay's works were collected in 1568.

died thirty-one years after Sir David Lyndsay, emulating his predecessor in his attacks upon the extravagance of his feminine contemporaries. One of his most successful efforts is his *Satire on the Town Ladies* of his time, from which the following stanzas are extracted:

Some wifis of the borrowstoun
Sae wonder vain are, and wantoun,
  In warld they wait [wot] not what to weir:
On claithis they ware [spend] mony a croun;
  And all for newfangleness of geir [attire].

And of fine silk his furril clokis,
With hingan sleeves, like geil pokis;
  Nae preaching will gar them forbeir,
To weir all thing that sin provokis;
  And all for newfangleness of geir. . . .

Sometime they will beir up their gown,
To show their wilicoat [petticoat] hingan down;
  And sometime baith they will upbeir,
To show their hose of black or brown;
  And all for newfangleness of geir. . . .

Their shoon of velvet, and their muilis!
In kirk they are not content of stuilis,
  The sermon when they sit to heir,
But carries cusheons like vain fulis;
  And all for newfangleness of geir.

CHAPTER II.

SHAKESPEARE AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES.

Poetry mostly merged in drama—Wit and humour chiefly seen in prose—William Shakespeare—'Love's Labour's Lost'—Edward Spenser—'Prosopopoia'—Sir John Haryngton—Epigrams—'A Precise Tailor'—Sir Walter Raleigh—'The Lie'—Epitaph—Nicholas Breton—'Farewell to Town'—Michael Drayton—'Nymphidia'—William Drummond—'Polemo-Middina'—Epigrams—'The Old and Young Courtier'—The 'Humours' of the Time—Thomas Nash—Thomas Marston—'What You Will'—Ben Jonson—Epigrams—Thomas Heywood—'The Nations'—Philip Massinger—'The City Madam'—James Shirley—'The Changes'—Elizabethan 'Comedy.'

CHAPTER II.

SHAKESPEARE AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES.

We come now to a period in the history of English literature in which wit and humour in the form of verse became comparatively rare and poor;—when poetry to a great extent was lost in drama, and when the dramatists generally resorted to prose when they wished to exchange the language of passion and of sentiment for that of fun. There were poets pure and simple in those days, as in our own: there were Spenser, with his wondrous allegory; Haryngton, with his polished epigram; Drayton, with his patriotic outbursts; and Raleigh, Breton, and Drummond, with their 'sugared' lyrics. But, if we except Spenser, all the great poets of the age were also dramatists, and largely confined their verse to the expression of their higher fancies, leaving (so to speak) their lower ones to find a humbler outlet in the way of prose. You notice this in almost every writer of that time. They did not wholly banish wit and humour from their measured utterances, as will be seen directly, but they certainly kept their richest, their most unctuous, as well as their most pointed sayings, for the scenes in which blank verse or heroic verse were disregarded, in favour of the unrhythmic speech of every day.

Especially was this the case with Shakespeare,* whose most brilliant wit-combats and most rollicking humour-flights are couched in prose. It is in prose that Beatrice and Benedick conduct their piquant railleries; and it is in prose that Dogberry rolls out his exquisite absurdities. The most delightful pages in Shakespearean drama are of this character, and the gleaner of Shakespearean wit and humour

* Born 1564, died 1616.

in the form of verse has, in comparison, but little to reward him for his pains. At the same time, his search is not entirely fruitless. For example: every one will remember—indeed, most of us must know by heart—such passages as that in which Jaques describes his meeting with a fool i' the forest, and that other equally familiar one in which Hotspur recounts his interview with a certain lord upon the battle-field. Less known—because the play is rarely acted now, and, I fear, but little read—are the many witty passages in *Love's Labour's Lost*,* a play in which Shakespeare's exuberant youthfulness found so lively and exhilarating a vent. There the verse in which the greater portion of the work is cast is charged with explosive repartee and scorching sarcasm. As in Sheridan's comedies, everyone speaks in the same language, and that language one of constant quip and quiddity. Take, for example, this description by Biron of his brother courtier Boyet,—a description which may be accepted as applying accurately to a certain type of gallant of Elizabeth's time:

> This fellow pecks up wit as pigeons peas,
> And utters it again when God doth please:
> He's wit's† pedlar, and retails his wares
> At wakes and wassails, meetings, markets, fairs,
> And we that sell by gross, the Lord doth know,
> Have not the grace to grace it with such show.
> This gallant pins the wenches to his sleeve;
> Had he been Adam, he'd have tempted Eve.
> He can carve,‡ too, and lisp! Why, this is he
> That kissed away his hand in courtesy;
> This is the ape of form, monsieur the nice,
> That, when he plays at tables, chides the dice
> In honourable terms; nay, he can sing
> A mean§ most meanly; and, in ushering,
> Mend him who can. The ladies call him sweet;
> The stairs, as he treads on them, kiss his feet.

* Published in 1598.
† Pronounced as if dissyllables.
‡ *i.e.* Make a gesture of recognition with the little finger.
§ *i.e.* The tenor, in music.

This is the flower that smiles on every one,
To show his teeth as white as whale's* bone:
And consciences, that will not die in debt,
Pay him the due of honey-tongued Boyet.

What fun there is, too, in the interlude in *A Midsummer Night's Dream!* What humour there is in Quince's utterances as Prologue! What a 'witty partition' is the Wall through which Pyramus and Thisbe are to speak! There is rich humour in all the scenes in *The Taming of the Shrew* with which Shakespeare's name has been associated; but it is humour of the kind that calls for longer extract than can be afforded here. We are fain, indeed, to content ourselves with but one more specimen of our great poet's work in this vein, in the shape of one of the numerous songs scattered over the dramas. This one, like the lines above, is from *Love's Labour's Lost*, and is a graphic as well as a humorous picture of life in winter:

When icicles hang by the wall,
And Dick the shepherd blows his nail,
And Tom bears logs into the hall,
And milk comes frozen home in pail;
When blood is nipped, and ways be foul,
Then nightly sings the staring owl,
Tu-who!
Tu-whit, tu-who! a merry note,
While greasy Joan doth keel† the pot.

When all aloud the wind doth blow,
And coughing drowns the parson's saw,
And birds sit brooding in the snow,
And Marian's nose looks red and raw;
When roasted crabs‡ hiss in the bowl,
Then nightly sings the staring owl,
Tu-whit!
Tu-who! a merry note,
While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.

With these quotations, which give, of course, a very faint

* Pronounced as if dissyllables. † Skim. ‡ Apples.

reflection of Shakespeare's comic power, we must leave a subject which, if discussion of the poet's prose were in our plan, would yield many a page of hearty and enthusiastic comment. As it is, Falstaff is lost to us, and so are Aguecheek and Belch and Touchstone (save in his snatch of parody on the lines to Rosalind), and a hundred other characters in which the myriad-minded dramatist embodied his humorous and witty notions.

Spenser* was a first-rate poet, but not, certainly, a first-rate humourist. Yet he has left behind him at least one obvious satire in his *Prosopopoia; or Mother Hubbard's Tale*, the best passage in which is that in which the priest tells the fox, who is anxious to take orders, how to obtain a living in the church:

First, when ye have in handsome wise
Yourselves attirèd as you can devise,
Then to some nobleman yourself apply,
Or other great one in the worldè's eye,
That hath a zealous disposition
To God, and so to his religion.
There must thou fashion eke a goodly zeal,
Such as no carpers may contrayr reveal,
For each thing feignèd ought more wary be.
There thou must walk in sober gravity,
And seem as saint-like as St. Radegund;
Fast much, pray oft, look lowly on the ground,
And unto every one do court'sy meek.
These looks (nought saying) do a benefice seek;
And be thou sure one not to lack ere long.
But if thee list unto the court to throng,
And there to hunt after the hopèd prey,
Then must thou thee dispose another way;
For there thou needs must learn to laugh, to lie,
To face, to forge, to scoff, to company,
To crouch, to please, to be a beetle-stock
Of thy great master's will, to scorn, to mock.
So mayst thou chance mock out a benefice,—

* Born, 1552; died, 1599. *Prosopopoia* was printed in 1591.

Unless thou canst one conjure by device,—
Or cast a figure for a bishopric;
And, if one could, it were but by a school trick.
These be the ways by which without reward
Livings in courts be gotten, though full hard,
For nothing there is done without a fee.
The courtier needs must recompensèd be
With a benevolence, or have in gage
The *primitias* of your parsonage: . . . .
Do not thou, therefore, seek a living there,
But of more private persons seek elsewhere,
Whereas thou mayst compound a bettèr penny;
For some good gentleman that hath the right
Unto his church for to present a wight
Will cope with thee in reasonable wise,
That if the living yearly do arise
To forty pound, that then his youngest son
Shall twenty have, and twenty thou hast won.

This is not very brilliant satire, but it shows us—what, indeed, we knew to be the case—that Spenser was not compact of imagination only, but had a keen scent for the actualities of life, and a certain aptness in commenting on them. Elsewhere, the general tendency of his poetry is, it need hardly be said, rather didactic than otherwise; there is little in it of spontaneous humour, and scarcely anything of wit.

Haryngton,* who died thirteen years after Spenser, was the epigrammatist of his time, and a much more polished and pointed one than Heywood. Every one knows his famous couplets on Treason and Fortune, and his hardly less familiar quatrain 'Against Writers who Carp at other Men's Books.' The following, 'On Enclosing a Common,' is a favourable specimen of his usual manner:

A lord, that purposed for his more avail
To compass in a common with a rail,

* Sir John Haryngton; born 1561, died 1612. His *Epigrams most Elegant and Witty* were published in 1633.

Was reckoning with his friends about the cost
And charge of every rail and every post:
But he that wished his greedy humour crost
Said, 'Sir, provide you posts, and, without failing,
Your neighbours round about will find you railing.'

There is sly pungency in this, 'On a Drunken Smith:'

I heard that Smug the smith for ale and spice
Sold all his tools, and yet he kept his vice.

Included among his works is this somewhat diverting anecdote of 'A Precise Tailor:'

A tailor, a man of an upright dealing,
True but for lying, honest but for stealing,
Did fall one day extremely sick by chance,
And on a sudden was in wondrous trance.
The fiends of hell, mustering in fearful manner,
Of sundry-coloured silks displayed a banner,
Which he had stol'n, and wished, as they did tell,
That one day he might find it all in hell.
The man, affrighted at this apparition,
Upon discovery grew a great precisian.
He bought a Bible of the new translation,
And in his life he showed great reformation.
He walkèd mannerly and talkèd meekly;
He heard three lectures and two sermons weekly.
He vowed to shun all companies unruly,
And in his speech he used no oath but 'truly,'
And, zealously to keep the Sabbath's rest,
His meat for that day on the even was dressed.
And lest the custom that he had to steal
Might cause him sometime to forget his zeal,
He gives his journeyman a special charge
That, if the stuff allowed fell out too large,
And that to filch his fingers were inclined,
He then should put the banner in his mind.
This done, I scant the rest can tell for laughter.
A captain of a ship came three days after,

And brought three yards of velvet and three-quarters,
To make Venetians down below the garters.
He, that precisely knew what was enough,
Soon slipped away three-quarters of the stuff.
His man, espying it, said in derision,
'Remember, master, how you saw the vision!'
'Peace, knave,' quoth he; 'I did not see one rag
Of such-a-coloured silk in all the flag.'

Sir Walter Raleigh's claim to mention here is founded on his verses called 'The Lie,' which have considerable pithiness and force.* The writer therein bids his soul go forth and give the world the lie in this way:

Say to the court, it glows
  And shines like rotten wood;
Say to the church, it shows
  What's good, and doth no good;
If church and court reply,
Then give them both the lie. . . .

Tell men of high condition,
  That manage the estate,
Their purpose is ambition,
  Their practice only hate;
And if they once reply,
Then give them all the lie. . . .

Tell zeal it wants devotion;
  Tell love it is but lust;
Tell time it is but motion;
  Tell flesh it is but dust;
And wish them not reply,
For thou must give the lie. . . .

Tell wit how much it wrangles
  To tickle points of niceness;

* This composition is sometimes attributed to Sylvester, but is ascribed to Raleigh by Dr. Hannah, in his careful edition of that writer's poems (1875). The balance of evidence is certainly in Raleigh's favour. The poet was born in 1552, and died in 1618. His works were published in 1751 and 1829.

Tell wisdom she entangles
Herself in over-wiseness;
And when they do reply,
Straight give them both the lie. . . .

The fault of the piece is its monotony of style and motive, which makes it pall upon the reader. There is some vigour in this trifling epitaph on the Earl of Leicester:

Here lies the noble warrior that never blunted sword;
Here lies the noble courtier that never kept his word;
Here lies his excellency that governed all the state;
Here lies the Lord of Leicester that all the world did hate.

Nicholas Breton, who died six years after Raleigh, was a prolific writer; but few of his works—the 'works of a young wit,' as he described them—have come down to posterity. A few of them figure in collections, but they are always the same pieces, and they are rarely of first-rate quality. He is best known by his 'Farewell to Town,' each stanza of which concludes with a fairly happy stroke of humour. For example:

. . . Thou gallant court, to thee farewell!
For froward fortune me denies
Now longer near to thee to dwell.
I must go live, I wot not where,
Nor how to live when I come there.

And next, adieu, you gallant dames,
The chief of noble youth's delight;
Untoward fortune now so frames
That I am banished from your sight;
And in your stead, against my will,
I must go live with country Gill. . . .

And now, farewell, thou gallant lute,
With instruments of music's sounds!
Recorder, cittern, harp, and flute,
And heavenly descants on sweet grounds;
I now must leave you all, indeed,
And make some music on a reed! . . .

And now, farewell, both spear and shield,
  Caliver, pistol, arquebuss;
See, see, what sighs my heart doth yield,
  To think that I must leave you thus;
And lay aside my rapier blade,
And take in hand a ditching spade! . . .

And now, farewell, each dainty dish,
  With sundry sorts of sugared wine;
Farewell, I say, fine flesh and fish,
  To please this dainty mouth of mine;
I now, alas, must leave all these,
And make good cheer with bread and cheese! . . .

And, farewell, all gay garments now,
  With jewels rich, of rare device;
Like Robin Hood, I wot not how,
  I must go range in woodman's wise;
Clad in a coat of green or gray,
And glad to get it if I may.

Drayton's best work, of course, is to be found in his *Polyolbion* and *England's Heroical Epistles**—poems which are full of a sonorous eloquence. Some of his lesser poems are, however, marked by an agreeable fancy, which now and then takes quite a witty tinge, as in *Nymphidia*, where the chariot of Queen Mab is described in terms that remind one irresistibly of Mercutio's famous lines on the same subject:

Her chariot ready straight is made,
Each thing therein is fitting laid,
That she by nothing might be stayed,
  For nought must be her letting;
Four nimble gnats the horses were,
Their harnesses of gossamer,
Fly Crainon her charioteer,
  Upon the coach-box getting.

* Published respectively in or about 1612-22 and 1595. *Nymphidia* was printed in 1627. Drayton was born in 1563, and died in 1631. His works were collected in 1752.

Her chariot of a snail's fine shell,
Which for the colours did excel,
The fair Queen Mab becoming well,
So lively was the limning;
The seat the soft wool of the bee,
The cover (gallantly to see)
The wing of a pied butterflee;
I trow 'twas simple trimming.

The wheels composed of crickets' bones,
And daintily made for the nonce;
For fear of rattling on the stones
With thistle-down they shod it;
For all her maidens much did fear,
If Oberon had chanced to hear
That Mab his queen should have been there,
He would not have abode it.

She mounts her chariot with a trice,
Nor would she stay for no advice,
Until her maids, that were so nice,
To wait on her were fitted;
But ran away herself alone,
Which, when they heard, there was not one
But hasted after to be gone,
As she had been diswitted.

Hop and Mop, and Drab so clear,
Pip and Trip, and Skip, that were
To Mab, their sovereign, so dear,
Her special maids of honour;
Fib and Tib, and Pink and Pin,
Tick and Quick, and Jill and Jin,
Tit and Nit, and Wap and Win,
The train that wait upon her.

Though William Drummond did not die till thirty-three years after Shakespeare, he was thirty years old when Shakespeare died, and may therefore be described with justice as contemporary with him. Some of his sonnets will always be remembered; nor should it be forgotten that he

was the author of (so far as we are aware) the earliest macaronic poem in the language. This was the *jeu d'esprit* entitled *Polemo-Middina*,* which, if occasionally vulgar, is now and then, at other times, amusing. A very few lines will give some notion of its character:

Hic aderant Geordy Akinhedius, et little Johnus,
Et Jamy Richæus, et stout Michel Hendersonus,
Qui jolly tryppas ante alios dansare solebat,
Et bobbare bene, et lassas kissare bonæas;
Duncan Olyphantus, valde stalvartus, et ejus
Filius eldestus jolyboyus, atque oldmondus
Qui pleugham longo gaddo dryvare solebat; . . .
Et ploucky-fac'd Watty Strang, atque in-kneed
Alsinder Alken . . .
Insuper hic aderant Tom. Taylor, et Hen. Watsonus,
Et Tomy Gilchristus, et Jamy Tomsonus, et unus
Norland-bornus homo, valde valde Anticovenanter,
Nomine Gordonus, valde blackmondus, et alter
(Deil stick it ignoro nomen), slavry beardius homo.

Drummond was also an epigrammatist, but only two out of his fifteen efforts can claim any consideration whatever. One of these, 'On the House of Commons,' runs:

When lately Pym descended into hell,
Ere he the cups of Lethè did carouse,
What place that was, he callèd loud to tell—
To whom a devil: This is the Lower House.

The other, 'On a Briefless Lawyer,' goes:

Here Rixus lies, a novice in the laws,
Who 'plains he came to hell without a cause.

To this period belongs the famous ballad of 'The Old and Young Courtier'—written, Leigh Hunt thought, by Thomas Dekker—in which some one, writing in the reign of James I., contrasts the habits of the gentry of that time

* Printed in 1684. Drummond was born in 1585. He wrote *The Cypress Grove*, *Tears for the Death of Meliades*, *Forth Feasting*, and other works.

unfavourably as compared with those of the generation immediately preceding. The piece is full of humorous touches; and, like so much that we have quoted and intend to quote, happily illustrates the customs of our forefathers. Here are most of the verses:

An old song made by an aged old pate
Of an old worshipful gentleman, who had a great estate,
That kept a brave old house at a bountiful rate,
And an old porter to relieve the poor at his gate;
Like an old courtier of the queen's,
And the queen's old courtier.

With an old lady, whose anger one word assuages,
That every quarter paid their old servants their wages,
And never knew what belong'd to coachmen, footmen, nor pages,
But kept twenty old fellows with blue coats and badges;
Like an old courtier, &c.

With an old study fill'd full of learnèd old books,
With an old reverend chaplain—you might know him by his looks,
With an old buttery hatch worn quite off the hooks,
With an old kitchen that maintain'd half a dozen old cooks;
Like an old courtier, &c.

With an old hall hung about with pikes, guns, and bows,
With old swords and bucklers that had borne many shrewd blows,
And an old frieze coat to cover his worship's trunk hose,
And a cup of old sherry to comfort his copper nose;
Like an old courtier, &c.

With a good old fashion, when Christmas was come,
To call in all his old neighbours with bagpipe and drum,
With good cheer enough to furnish every old room,
And old liquor able to make a cat speak and a man dumb,
Like an old courtier, &c.

With an old falconer, huntsman, and a kennel of hounds,
That never hawk'd, nor hunted, but in his own grounds,
Who, like a wise man, kept himself within his own bounds,
And when he died gave every child a thousand good pounds;
Like an old courtier, &c.

But to his eldest son his house and land he assign'd,
Charging him in his will to keep the old bountiful mind,
To be good to his old tenants, and to his neighbours be kind;
But in the ensuing ditty you shall hear how he was inclin'd;
Like a young courtier of the king's,
And the king's young courtier.

Like a flourishing young gallant newly come to his land,
Who keeps a brace of painted madams at his command,
And takes up a thousand pounds upon his father's land,
And gets drunk in a tavern, till he can neither go nor stand;
Like a young courtier, &c.

With a newfangled lady, that is dainty, nice, and spare,
Who never knew what belong'd to good housekeeping, or care,
Who buys gaudy-colour'd fans to play with a wanton air,
And seven or eight different dressings of other women's hair;
Like a young courtier, &c.

With a new-fashioned hall, built where the old one stood,
Hung round with new pictures, that do the poor no good,
With a fine marble chimney, wherein burns neither coal nor wood,
And a new smooth shovel-board, whereon no victuals ne'er stood,
Like a young courtier, &c.

With a new study, stuft full of pamphlets and plays,
And a new chaplain, that swears faster than he prays,
With a new buttery hatch, that opens once in four or five days,
And a new French cook, to devise fine kickshaws and toys;
Like a young courtier, &c.

With a new fashion, when Christmas is drawing on,
On a new journey to London straight we must all be gone
And leave none to keep house but our new porter John,
Who relieves the poor with a thump on the back with a stone;
Like a young courtier, &c.

It is, however, to the dramatists, after all, that we have to go for some of the brightest specimens of the *vis comica* of that period. In Nash and Beaumont and Fletcher, in Lodge and Middleton, in Marston and Jonson, in Massinger, Heywood, and Dekker we have (Shakespeare apart) unquestionably the leading humourists of that age. And we say humourists, instead of wits, because it was chiefly in the detection and exposition of the 'humours' of their countrymen that these dramatists excelled. Shakespeare had an infinitely wider range, and was great both as a humourist and a wit. Moreover, his humour was of a considerably more extensive scope than theirs, dealing with the inner life of human nature and the peculiarities of human circumstance, as well as with the temporary characteristics of sixteenth-century Englishmen. His contemporaries were, as a rule, different in their method, and their work is consequently less valuable and interesting as a whole. Still, even they painted sometimes with a broader brush than at other times, and are occasionally permanent in the quality of their satire.

Let us take, first, Nash, who died sixteen years before Shakspere, and made himself famous by his onslaughts on the various vanities of his time.* Not much of his production has come down to us, save in the way of a few lyrics, not of a particularly lively character. He was, perhaps, more than any of his class, a man of his age, keenly alive to its shortcomings, and delighting in his capacity for holding them up to ridicule and reprobation.

John Marston was the Churchill of his time—a biting satirist, who seems to have had no sympathy with, or feeling

* Thomas Nash (1567—about 1600) produced *The Anatomy of Absurdity*, *Pierce Penniless*, *Have with you at Saffron Walden*, and many other works.

for, the gentler passions and emotions, and to have devoted himself, like Nash, to ceaseless attacks upon the vices and follies of his fellows.* As forcible as Churchill, he was even coarser in his style and language; his usual manner is almost brutal in its violence. Yet occasionally he can soften into sarcasm, as may be seen in this skit upon the scholars of his day, in which he approaches closely to the level of his master, Shakespeare. It is from *What You Will:*

I was a scholar: seven useful springs
Did I deflower in quotations
Of crossed opinions 'bout the soul of man;
The more I learnt, the more I learnt to doubt.
Delight, my spaniel, slept while I baused leaves,
Tossed o'er the dunces, pored on the old print
Of titled words: and still my spaniel slept,
Whilst the wasted lamp-oil, baited my flesh,
Shrunk up my veins: and still my spaniel slept.
And still I held converse with Zabarell,
Aquinas, Scotus, and the musty saw
Of antick Donate: still my spaniel slept.
Still on went I; first, *an sit anima;*
Then, an it were mortal. O hold, hold; at that
They're at brain-buffets, fell by the ears amain
Pell-mell together: still my spaniel slept.
Then, whether 'twere corporeal, local, fixt,
Ex traduce, but whether I had free will
Or no, hot philosophers
Stood banding factions, all so strongly propp'd,
I staggered, knew not which was firmer part,
But thought, quoted, read, observed, and pryed,
Stufft noting-books: and still my spaniel slept.
At length he waked, and yawn'd; and, by yon sky,
For aught I know, he knew as much as I.

Ben Jonson, who died three years after Marston, ranks still higher as a dramatist and a poet, and was, after Shakespeare, the greatest wit and humourist of his era.

* He was the author of *The Malcontent, What You Will, The Insatiate Countess,* and other plays, produced between 1600 and 1634, in which latter year he died.

Neither his art nor his humour, however, had any of the brightness or spontaneity of Shakespeare's. They both have the appearance of being forced—of being manufactured for the occasion. As a humourist, too, Ben Jonson was too fond of personifying types—of getting hold of an abstraction, labelling it with some descriptive name, and then moving it about like an automaton. He calls one character 'Down-right,' a second 'Well-bred,' a third 'Formal,' and so on. As a wit, he is given to considerable affectation. From his comedies, indeed, it is impossible to quote—the quotable passages being invariably in prose; his 'Epigrams,' however, yield a few lines for purposes of quotation. In many cases they are too coarse for reproduction. Here, too, we find him personifying 'humours,' and satirising them under names descriptive of their nature. Thus we have lines addressed 'To Brain-Hardy,' 'On Don Surly,' 'To Sir Luckless Woo-all,' and the like. Here, for example, is a quatrain 'To Doctor Empiric':

> When men a dangerous disease did 'scape
> Of old, they gave a cock to Esculape:
> Let me give two, that doubly am got free—
> From my disease's danger, and from thee.

Here is a couplet 'To Fool or Knave:'

> Thy praise or dispraise is to me alike:
> One doth not stroke me, nor the other strike.

Here is another quatrain 'On Playwright:'

> Playwright, by chance, hearing some toys I'd writ,
> Cried to my face, they were th' elixir of wit:
> And I must now believe him; for to-day
> Five of my jests, then stolen, past him a play.

And here, a fourth, 'On Court-worm:'

> All men are worms; but this no man. In silk
> 'Twas brought to court first wrapped, and white as milk;
> Where, afterwards, it grew a butterfly,
> Which was a caterpillar: so 't will die.

Charles Lamb called Heywood 'a sort of prose Shake-

speare.'* The praise is higher, perhaps, than most critics would give to that prolific but unequal writer, who is best known nowadays by his charming song, 'Pack, Clouds, away, and welcome Day.' He has many humorous passages in his plays, but they are, as a rule, not adapted for quotation. The following song is from *A Challenge for Beauty:*

The Spaniard loves his ancient slop;
A Lombard the Venetian;
And some like breechless women go,
The Russe, Turk, Jew, and Grecian:

The thrifty Frenchman wears small waist,
The Dutch his belly boasteth;
The Englishman is for them all,
And for each fashion coasteth.

The Turk in linen wraps his head,
The Persian his in lawn too,
The Russe with sable furs his cap,
And change will not be drawn to.

The Spaniard's constant to his block,
The French inconstant ever;
But of all felts that may be felt,
Give me your English beaver.

The German loves his coney-wool,
The Irishman his shag too,
The Welch his Monmouth loves to wear,
And of the same will brag too.

Some love the rough, and some the smooth,
Some great, and others small things;
But O, your liquorish Englishman,
He loves to deal in all things.

The Russe drinks quasse; Dutch, Lubeck's beer,
And that is strong and mighty;
The Briton he Metheglen quaffs,
The Irish aqua vitæ.

* Thomas Heywood (died 1640) was the author, or part author, of more than two hundred plays.

The French affects the Orleans grape,
  The Spaniard sips his sherry,
The English none of these can 'scape,
  But he with all makes merry.

The Italian in her high chioppine,*
  Scotch lass, and lovely Erse too,
The Spanish donna, French madam,
  He doth not fear to go to.

Nothing so full of hazard, dread,
  Nought lives above the centre,
No health, no fashion, wine or wench,
  On which he dare not venture.

There is also a rather amusing song in Heywood's *Rape of Lucrece* on the subject of tavern signs and their adaptability to certain classes of the community:

The gentry to the King's Head,
  The nobles to the Crown,
The knights unto the Golden Fleece,
  And to the Plough the clown.
The churchman to the Mitre,
  The shepherd to the Star,
The gardener hies him to the Rose,
  To the Drum the man of war;
To the Feathers, ladies, you; the Globe
  The sea-man doth not scorn;
The usurer to the Devil, and
  The townsman to the Horn.

And so on.

Massinger's humour is satirical, and not specially agreeable or forcible; in fact, it is more tirade than anything else, and may be rapidly passed over. A taste of his quality may be found in *The City Madam*,† where Luke thus rebukes his brother's wife:

Your fortune,
Or rather your husband's industry, advanc'd you

* Clog, or patten.

† *The City Madam* was printed in 1659. Philip Massinger, its author, had died nineteen years previously.

To the rank of merchant's wife. He made a knight,
And your sweet mistress-ship ladyfied, you wore
Satin on solemn days, a chain of gold,
A velvet hood, rich borders, and sometimes
A dainty miniver cap, a silver pin
Headed with pearl worth threepence; and thus far
You were privileged, and no man envied it;
It being for the city's honour that
There should be distinction between
The wife of a patrician and a plebeian,—
But when the height
And dignity of London's blessings grew
Contemptible, and the name lady mayoress
Became a byword, and you scorned the means
By which you were raised . . .
. . . and no object pleased you
But the glittering pomp and bravery of the court . . .
No English workman then could please your fancy,
The French and Tuscan dress your whole discourse . . .
. . . your borrow'd hair,
Powder'd and curl'd, was by your dresser's art
Form'd like a coronet, hang'd with diamonds,
And the richest orient pearl; your carbanets,
That did adorn your neck, of equal value; . . .
Great lords and ladies feasted, to survey
Embroider'd petticoats; and sickness feign'd,
That your nightrails of forty pounds apiece
Might be seen with envy of the visitants:
Rich pantables in ostentation shown,
And roses worth a family. You were served
In plate;
Stirr'd not a foot without a coach; and going
To church, not for devotion, but to show
Your pomp, you were tickled when the beggars cried,
Heaven save your honour!

The passage is continued in the same strain of sarcasm, and is altogether too serious in tone to be regarded as humorous in the true sense of the term.

James Shirley* was one of the most prolific of the Elizabethan dramatists, and fitly brings them to a close. He is now known almost wholly by his lyrics, some of which have decided amatory grace, whilst others have a notable didactic flavour,—as for example the lines on 'the glories of our blood and state' in *The Contention of Ajax and Achilles*. He wrote comedies, but was not distinctively a comic writer, as we now regard the term. He has a certain play of wit, but that is all. Thus, in the course of his comedy, *The Changes*, we have this contention between Caperwit and a friend of his on the subject of the use of epithets in poetry. The friend asks:

Master Caperwit, before you read, pray tell me,
Have your verses any adjectives?
Caper. Adjectives! would you have a poem without
Adjectives? They are flowers, the grace of all our language.
A well-chosen epithet doth give new soul
To fainting poesy, and makes every verse
A bride! With adjectives we bait our lines,
When we do fish for gentlewomen's loves,
And with their sweetness catch the nibbling ear
Of amorous ladies; with the music of
These ravishing nouns we charm the silken tribe,
And make the gallant melt with apprehension
Of the rare word. I will maintain it against
A bundle of grammarians, in poetry
The substantive itself cannot *subsist*
Without its adjective.
Friend. But for all that,
Those words would sound more full, methinks, that are not
So larded; and, if I might counsel you,
You would compose a sonnet clean without them.
A row of stately substantives would march
Like Switzers, and bear all the field before them;
Carry their weight; show fair, like deeds enroll'd;
Not writs, that are first made and after fill'd.

* Born in 1594, died in 1666, and author of over forty dramas. *The Contention* is dated 1659, *The Changes* 1632.

The truth is that, outside of Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, and Beaumont and Fletcher, Elizabethan comedy was frequently not comedy at all, the name being given to plays of which the action and character, if not absolutely tragic, were at least profoundly serious, the comic passages being either wholly subordinate in them or altogether absent from them. In fact, these pieces approach most closely to what are now called comedy-dramas—plays in which the serious and lighter elements of life are intermingled, and so arranged as to give mutual relief. Not until the Restoration did English dramatists return to the true style of comedy, as typified in such works as *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*,* and *The Fox*, works in which wit and humour were either the principal or only elements with which the writers worked.

* A comedy, written by Francis Beaumont in ridicule of the old romances, and said to have suggested to Buckingham the idea of his *Rehearsal*.

CHAPTER III.

FROM SHAKESPEARE TO DRYDEN.

Elizabethan and Caroline Comedy—Thomas Randolph—'Amyntas'—Richard Brome—'The Antipodes'—Henry Glapthorne—'Wit in a Constable'—Barten Holyday—'Tobacco'—Sir John Suckling—'The Pining Lover'—Sir John Mennis—'Sir John Suckling's Campaign'—John Donne—the 'Satires'—Epigrams—Joseph Hall—the 'Satires'—John Cleveland—'The Long Parliament'—'The Puritan'—John Corbet—'Journey into France'—Francis Quarles—'Hey, then, up go we'—the 'Emblems'—Abraham Cowley—'The Chronicle'—Robert Herrick—'The Invitation'—Epigrams.

CHAPTER III.

FROM SHAKESPEARE TO DRYDEN.

THE chasm between the comedy of men like Shirley and the truer work (of its kind) of men like Etherege and Congreve may be said to have been happily bridged over by two or three dramatists who flourished under the first two Stuart kings of England. In the works of Randolph and of Brome we see a nearer approach to purely comic motive and treatment than was made by the majority of Shakespeare's contemporaries. Randolph especially has considerable fancy; considerably more, for instance, than his master, Jonson, some of whose learning he possessed, and by whom he was liberally lauded.* His touch has ease and lightness; his mind altogether seems to have been more flexible and dainty than those of many of his predecessors; and one can understand the attraction that he had for his enthusiastic annotator, Leigh Hunt. Take the play by which he is remembered—*The Muses' Looking-Glass*. Its purpose may be roughly noted as didactic; yet its lessons are so agreeably told that the reader cannot but be charmed by them. Take, again, his faëry pastoral, *Amyntas*. A favourable specimen of his style may be found in the scene in which a young rogue named Dorylas persuades a foolish country gentleman named Jocastus that he (Dorylas) and his companions are Oberon and his attendants, and contrives in this way to despoil Jocastus' orchard. The passage is highly fanciful, but brightly humorous, especially in the part played in the affair by Bromius, Jocastus' servant, who is not so credulous as his master. The urchins have climbed the fruit-trees, and are singing snatches of song. Enter Jocastus and his man:

* *The Muses' Looking-Glass* was published in 1668, *Amyntas* in 1638. Randolph died in 1634.

Joc. What divine noise, fraught with immortal harmony,
Salutes mine ears?
Bro. Why, this immortal harmony
Rather salutes your orchard. [*Aside*] These young rascals,
These peascod-shellers, do so cheat my master,
We cannot have an apple in the orchard
But straight some fairy longs for it. [*To his master*] Well, if I
Might have my will, a whip again should jerk 'em
Into their old mortality.
Joc. Dars't thou, screech-owl,
With thy rude croaking interrupt their music,
Whose melody has made the spheres to lay
Their heavenly lutes aside, only to listen
To their more charming notes?
Bro. Say what you will,
I say a cudgel now were excellent music.

Chorus of Fairies.

Oberon, descende citus,
Ne cogaris hinc invitus.
Canes audio latrantes,
Et mortales vigilantes.

Joc. Prince Oberon! I heard his Grace's name.
Bro. O ho! I spy his Grace. Most noble Prince,
Come down, or I'll so pelt your Grace with stones,
That I believe your Grace was ne'er so pelted
Since 'twas a Grace.
Dor. Bold mortal, hold thy hand.
Bro. Immortal thief, come down, or I will fetch you. . . .
Dor. Jocastus, we are Oberon; and we thought
That one so near to us as you in favour
Would not have suffer'd this profane rude groom
Thus to impair our royalty.
Joc. Gracious Prince,
The fellow is a fool, and not yet purg'd
From his mortality.
Dor. Did we, out of love
And our entire affection, of all orchards
Choose yours, to make it happy by our dances; . . .

And you, ungrateful mortal, thus requite us,
All for one apple!
Joc. (*to Bro.*) Villain, thou hast undone me!
His Grace is much incensed.
Dor. You know, Jocastus,
Our Grace have orchards of our own, more precious
Than mortals can have any; and we sent you
A present of them t'other day.
Joc. 'Tis right:
Your Graces's humble servant must acknowledge it.
Bro. Some of his own, I'm sure.
Dor. I must confess
Their outside look'd something like yours indeed;
But then the taste more relish'd of eternity,
The same with nectar.
Joc. Your Grace is welcome
To anything I have. Nay, gentlemen [*to the others*],
Pray do not you spare neither.
Elves. *Tititàti.*
Joc. What say these mighty peers, great Oberon?
Dor. They cannot speak this language; but in ours
They thank you, and they say they will have none.
Elves. Tititàti, tititàti.
Joc. What say they now?
Dor. They do request you now
To grant them leave to dance a fairy ring
About your servant, and, for his offence,
Pinch him. Do you, the while, command the traitor
Not dare to stir, nor once presume to mutter.
Joc. Traitor, for so Prince Oberon deigns to call thee,
Stir not, nor mutter.
Bro. To be thus abus'd!
Joc. Ha! mutterest thou?
Bro. I have deserv'd better.
Joc. Still mutterest thou?
Bro. I see I must endure it.
Joc. Yet mutterest thou? Now, noble lords, begin,
When it shall please your honours.
Dor. Tititàti.

Our noble friend permits Tititàtee;
Do you not, sir?
Joc. How should I say I do?
Dor. Tititàtee.
Joc. Tititàtee, my noble lords.

Whereupon 'the fairies dance about Bromius, and pinch and scratch him in chorus.'

Brome* was more than Jonson's pupil; he was once upon a time his servant; but we are not sure that there is not more fun, *quà* fun, in his one comedy, *The Antipodes*, than in all Jonson's comedies together. He wrote many clever plays, but none so genuinely amusing as the one we name, which is very fresh and piquant in idea. That idea is, that at the Antipodes everything is the reverse of what it is with us. 'Wives rule their husbands' (surely, there is some mistake in that!); 'servants govern their masters' (there, too, the difference is not very clear!); and 'old men go to school again.' The latter is certainly original, and the notion is very well worked out in the following scene, in which a 'son' and 'servant,' a 'lady' and a 'gentleman' (both 'natives'), and 'an English traveller' figure:

Servant (*to his young master*). How well you saw
Your father to school to-day, knowing how apt
He is to play the truant!
Son. But he is not
Yet gone to school.
Ser. Stand by, and you shall see.

Enter three Old Men with satchels.

All Three (*singing*). Domine, domine, duster,
Three knaves in a cluster.
Son. O, this is gallant pastime. Nay, come on.
Is this your school? Was that your lesson, ha?
First Old Man. Pray now, good son, indeed, indeed—
Son. Indeed
You shall to school. Away with him, and take
Their wagships with him, the whole cluster of them.

* Died in 1652. *The Antipodes* was printed in 1633.

Second Old Man. You sha'n't send us now, so you sha'n't.
Third Old Man. We be none of your father, so we be'n't.
Son. Away with them, I say, and tell their schoolmistress
What truants they are, and bid her pay them soundly.
All Three. O, O, O!
Lady. Alas! will nobody beg pardon for
The poor old boys?
Trav. Do men of such fair years here go to school?
Gentle. They would die dunces else.
These were great scholars in their youth; but when
Age grows upon men here, their learning wastes,
And so decays, that if they live until
Threescore, their sons send them to school again.
They'd die as speechless else as new-born children.
Trav. 'Tis a wise nation; and the piety
Of the young men most rare and commendable.
Yet give me, as a stranger, leave to beg
Their liberty this day.
Son. 'Tis granted.
Hold up you heads, and thank the gentleman,
Like scholars, with your heels now.
All Three. Gratias, gratias, gratias.

And they go out singing.

A meritorious, but now unknown, writer of that time was Henry Glapthorne, of whose works Lamb reproduced a single extract, and that one a brief one, in his selections from the dramatic poets. The quotation is from the comedy entitled *Wit in a Constable*, and is as follows:

Collegian. Did you, ere we departed from the college,
O'erlook my library?
Servant. Yes, sir; and I find,
Although you tell me learning is immortal,
The paper and the parchment it is contained in
Savours of much mortality.
The moths have eaten more
Authentic learning than would richly furnish
A hundred country pedants; yet the worms
Are not one letter wiser.

Barten Holyday was a divine, a poet, and a translator, as well as a dramatist,* in which latter character he wrote a comedy called *Technogamia, or the Marriage of the Arts*, an allegorical drama, in which the characters form a species of commonwealth of the arts and sciences. The following song, on 'Tobacco,' which is a favourable specimen of its author's humour, is set down to be sung by a 'serving-man,' dressed in 'a pale russet suit, on the back whereof is expressed one filling a pipe of tobacco, his hat set round with tobacco-pipes, with a can of drink hanging at his girdle:'

Tobacco's a Musician,
And in a pipe delighteth;
It descends in a close,
Through the organs of the nose,
With a relish that inviteth.

This makes me sing, So ho, ho; so ho, ho, boys,
Ho boys, sound I loudly;
Earth ne'er did breed
Such a jovial weed,
Whereof to boast so proudly.

Tobacco is a Lawyer;
His pipes do love long cases,
When our brains it enters,
Our feet do make indentures,
While we seal with stamping paces.
This makes me sing, &c. . . .

Tobacco is a Traveller,
Come from the Indies hither;
It passed sea and land,
Ere it came to my hand,
And 'scaped the wind and weather.
This makes me sing, &c.

Tobacco is a Critic,
That still old paper turneth,

* He died in 1661.

Whose labour and care
Is as smoke in the air
That ascends from a rag when it burneth.
This makes me sing, &c.

Tobacco's an Ignis Fatuus—
A fat and fiery vapour,
That leads men about
Till the fire be out,
Consuming like a taper.
This makes me sing, &c. . . .

This is not quite up to the standard of the time; it certainly cannot stand comparison with the following lines, which we owe to the gaiety of Sir John Suckling:

Why so pale and wan, fond lover?
Prithee, why so pale?
Will, when looking well can't move her,
Looking ill prevail?
Prithee, why so pale?

Why so dull and mute, young sinner?
Prithee why so mute?
Will, when speaking well can't move her,
Saying nothing do't?
Prithee why so mute?

Quit, quit, for shame; this will not move,
This cannot take her;
If of herself she will not love,
Nothing can make her;
The devil take her!

This is familiar to most people; it may not be so generally known that it figures, along with the less-familiar 'No, no, fair Heretic,' in Suckling's 'tragi-comedy' of *Aglaura*, produced eight years after Holyday's comedy.* The song is one of the earliest and best examples of that form of comic writing which may be termed the 'surprise,' and of which Goldsmith's lines 'To Iris' are a later specimen.

* In 1637. Sir John died in 1641.

Sir John was himself the subject of some fairly entertaining stanzas, suggested by an incident in his military career. When Charles I. took up arms against the Parliament, Sir John raised a regiment of horse, equipped it thoroughly, and presented it to his royal master. Unfortunately, the men did not prove particularly serviceable, for no sooner did they catch sight of the Scotch army at Dunse than they turned tail and retreated precipitately—an inglorious proceeding, which Sir John Mennis, a soldier-poet of the time,* hastened to ridicule, in verses of which the following are a few:

Sir John he got him an ambling nag,
  To Scotland for to ride-a,
With a hundred horse more, all his own, he swore,
  To guard him on every side-a.

No errant-knight ever went to fight
  With half so gay a bravado;
Had you seen but his look, you'd have sworn on a book
  He'd have conquered a whole armada.

The ladies ran all to the windows to see
  So gallant and warlike a sight-a,
And as he pass'd by, they began to cry:
  'Sir John, why will you go fight-a?'

But he, like a cruel knight, spurr'd on;
  His heart would not relent-a,
For, till he came there, what had he to fear?
  Or why should he repent-a? . . .

None liked him so well as his own colonell,
  Who took him for John-de-Wearta;
But when there were shows of gunning and blows,
  My gallant was nothing so pert-a.

For when the Scots army came within sight,
  And all prepared to fight-a,
He ran to his tent; they ask'd what he meant;
  He swore he could not go right-a.

* See *Musarum Deliciæ* (1651).

The colonell sent for him back agen,
To quarter him in the van-a;
But Sir John did swear he would not come there,
To be killed the very first man-a. . . .

Curiously enough, there is more fun to be got out of these careless, devil-me-care rhymesters than out of the gentlemen who made satire a profession—who dubbed themselves satirists and their poems satires.

Donne was the earliest of the tribe in the period of which we are now treating, and anything more dreary than his satires it is utterly impossible to conceive. They are both harsh and crabbed, ingenious to a fault, and most involved in style. Moreover, they are very coarse, notwithstanding the clerical profession of their author,* and it is not easy to find a passage which could nowadays be read aloud. Satire No. 11 opens thus:

Sir, though (I thank God for it) I do hate
Perfectly all this town, yet there's one state
In all ill things so excellently best,
That hate towards them breeds pity towards the rest.
Though poetry indeed be such a sin,
As I think brings dearth and Spaniards in;
Though like the pestilence and old-fashion'd love,
Pedlingly it catch men, and doth remove
Never, till it be starv'd out, yet their state
Is poor, disarm'd, like Papists, not worth hate:
One (like a wretch, which at bar judg'd dead,
Yet prompts him which stands next and cannot read,
And saves his life) gives idiot actors means,
(Starving himself) to live by's labour'd scenes.
As in some organs puppets dance above
And bellows pant below, which them do move;
One would move love by rhymes, but witchcraft's charms
Bring not now their old fears, nor their old harms.
Rams and slings now are silly battery,
Pistolets are the best artillery.

* Donne was a D.D., and the author of *Essays in Divinity* and other pious works. He died in 1631.

And they who write like lords, rewards to get,
Are they not like singers at doors for meat?
And they who write because all write, have still
Th' excuse for writing, and for writing ill.
But he is worst who (beggarly) doth chaw
Other wit's fruits, and, in his ravenous maw
Rankly digested, doth those things out-spew,
As his own things; and they're his own, 'tis true;
For if one eat my meat, though it be known
The meat is mine, th' excrement is his own.

This is positively a favourable specimen of Donne's satiric work, though it is hardly calculated to send the reader headlong to his works. Nor must too much stress be laid upon Donne's epigrams, which are only fifteen or sixteen in number. They are certainly original enough, but they form a very small outcome, and even of that only a couple of examples are at all well known. One is on 'A Lame Beggar:'

'I am unable,' yonder beggar cries,
'To stand or move;' if he says true, he lies.

The other is on 'Phryne:'

Thy flattering picture, Phryne,'s like to thee
Only in this, that you both painted be.

These are the best; the others are every one inferior.

Hall's satires are those of a young man; they are bold in thought and in expression, and were condemned by Bishop Bancroft to the flames. Hall himself neglected them after he became a bishop.* They are, however, the foundation of his fame, and may still be read with interest, as throwing light upon the customs and characters of his day. They are still far from the clear force of Dryden, but they are unquestionably an advance upon those of Donne. Indeed, Hall was not, perhaps, entirely wrong when he claimed for himself—in spite of Donne and Wyatt—the title of first English satirist. He was certainly the first to approximate

* Joseph Hall (1574-1656) was successively Bishop of Exeter and Norwich.

to clearness and simplicity of style—always supposing that we leave Chaucer out of account, as being more of a humourist than of a satirist. Hall's satires are in six 'books,' called *Virgidemiarum*, and, beginning with the authors of the day, go on to sketch, in rapid succession, most of the follies and abuses of the age. Here, for example, in the fifth satire of Book III., we have a severe passage on the sale of benefices in the church:

> Saw'st thou ever 'Si quis' patch'd on Paul's church door,
> To seek some vacant vicarage before?
> Who wants a churchman that can service say,
> Read fast and fair his monthly homily?
> And wed and bury, and make christian souls?
> Come to the left side alley of Saint Pouls.
> Thou servile fool, why could'st thou not repair
> To buy a benefice at steeple-fair?
> There mightest thou, for but a slender price,
> Advowson thee with some fat benefice:
> Or if thee list not wait for dead men's shoon,
> Nor pray each morn th' incumbent's days were done:
> A thousand patrons thither ready bring
> Their new-fal'n churches to the chaffering;
> I take three years' stipend; no man asketh more;
> Go take possession of the church porch door,
> And ring thy bells; luck stroken in thy fist:
> The parsonage is thine, or ere thou wist.
> Saint Fools of Gotham might thy parish be
> For this thy base and servile simony.

Here, in the fourth satire of Book V., we have a fierce description of a 'Farmer's Heir:'

> Villius, the wealthy farmer, left his heir
> Twice twenty sterling pounds to spend by year:
> The neighbours praisen Villio's hide-bound son,
> And say it was a goodly portion,
> Not knowing how some merchants' dow'r can rise,
> By Sunday's tale to fifty centuries;
> Or to weigh down a leaden bride with gold,
> Worth all that Matho bought, or Pontice sold.

But whiles ten pound goes to his wife's new gown,
Nor little less can serve to suit his own;
Whiles one piece pays her idle waiting man,
Or buys a hood, or silver-handled fan,
Or hires a Friezeland trotter, half yard deep,
To drag his tumbrell through the staring Cheap
Or whiles he rideth with two liveries,
And 's treble rated at the subsidies;
One end a kennel keeps of thriftless hounds;
What think ye rests of all my younker's pounds
To diet him, or deal out at his door,
To coffer up, or stock his wasting store?
If then I reckoned right, it should appear
That forty pounds serve not the farmer's heir.

Two or three years after Hall, died John Cleveland, the son of an English rector, but himself as far as possible from being clerical—being, in fact, a fighting man, and withal a bitter satirist, perhaps the bitterest of his age. By an irony of fate he is remembered only by a couple of lines which occur in one of his larger works, and which are often referred to as an epigram:

Had Cain been Scot, God would have changed his doom,
Not forced him wander, but compelled him home.

These, in their vigour and their concentration, form anything but a bad specimen of his satiric work, very much of which was directed against the Scotch, for whom he appears to have had as keen a hatred as Dr. Johnson had. For the rest, the keynote of Cleveland's song is his devotion to the Cavalier cause, and to that of Charles I. especially. Take, for example, his verses on the 'Long Parliament,' with all their biting irony:

What wholesome laws you have ordained
Whereby our property's maintained
'Gainst those would us undo!
So that our fortunes and our lives—
Nay, what is dearer—our own wives—
Are wholly kept by you. . . .

Your godly wisdom hath found out
The true religion, without doubt;
For sure among so many
(We have five hundred at the least)
Is not the gospel much increased?
All must be pure, if any.

And, again, in his lines upon 'The Puritan,' we have this unfavourable characterisation:

With face and fashion to be known
For one of sure election;
With eye all white, and many a groan,
With neck aside to draw in tone;
With harp in's nose, or he is none;
See a new teacher of the town,
O the town, O the town's new teacher!

And so on. Cleveland was a voluminous writer, and his works well repay such study as may be given to them by a modern student.*

Wither, on the other hand, was a Puritan, though, sooth to say, there is but little indication of it in his verses. His satiric productions were of early growth and publication, and, having worked off his spleen in 1613, in the form of a very vigorous poem entitled *Abuses Stript and Whipt*, he contented himself in future with the cultivation of such graceful fancies as we meet with in *The Shepherd's Hunting* and *The Mistress of Philarete*.† Perhaps his imprisonment in the Marshalsea had something to do with his change of tone; certain it is that change of tone there was, and certain it is that the world has benefited by the change. Who would give up the famous lines beginning

Shall I, wasting in despair,
Die because a woman's fair?

for all the turgid expressions of the youthful poet's dissatisfaction with contemporary men and things?

* They were published in 1687, nearly thirty years after their author's death.

† These two works appeared respectively in 1615 and 1622.

Let us turn rather to the merry Bishop Corbet, of whom so many good stories are told, and who wrote at least two or three thoroughly humorous productions.* Among these 'The Distracted Puritan' is perhaps the most vigorous; but it is vigorous at the expense of being somewhat coarse. There is some good satire, too, by Corbet, on the ladies' dresses of his day. Lighter and jauntier than either is his description of 'A Journey into France,' in the course of which he dilates upon the 'relics' shown to him at St. Denis,

Where who is apt for to believe
May see our Lady's right arm sleeve,
And eke her old pantouffles. . . .

There is one of the Cross's nails,
Which whoso sees his bonnet vails,
And, if he will, may kneel;
Some say 'twas false, 'twas never so,
Yet, feeling it, thus much I know,
It is as true as steel.

There is a lanthorn which the Jews,
When Judas led them forth, did use;
It weighs my weight downright.
But to believe it, you must think
The Jews did put a candle in't,
And then 'twas very light.

He bestows, besides, a good deal of his persiflage upon the young King Louis XIII., then but a lad:

He is of all his dukes and peers
Reverenced for much wit at his years,
Nor must you think it much;
For he with a little switch doth play,
And make fine dirty pies of clay;
O never king made such!

A bird that can but kill a fly,
Or prate, doth please his majesty,
'Tis known to every one.

* His works were printed in 1647. He was Bishop of Oxford and Norwich, and died in 1635.

The Duke of Guise gave him a parrot,
And he had twenty cannons for it,
For his new galleon. . . .

Birds round about his chamber stand,
And he them feeds with his own hand:
'Tis his humility.
And if they do want anything,
They need but whistle for their king,
And he comes presently.

It cannot be said, however, that this production is, at its best, particularly brilliant or remarkable.

In Quarles we have yet another Royalist writer, and the last man, you would say, to whom any one would go for humorous poetry! Yet outside of the 'Emblems,' Quarles is found writing occasional verses of considerable sprightliness, as in his 'Hey, then, up go we,' in which he attacks the Puritans with a good deal of vigorous irony—an irony not so mordant as John Cleveland's, but still very effective in its way. As, for example:

We'll put down Universities,
Where learning is professed,
Because they practise and maintain
The language of the Beast;
We'll drive the doctors out of doors
And all that learned be;
We'll cry all arts and learning down,
And hey, then, up go we!

We'll down with deans and prebends too,
And I rejoice to tell ye,
We then shall get our fill of pig,
And capons for the belly;
We'll burn the Fathers' weighty tomes,
And make the Schoolmen free;
We'll down with all that smells of wit,
And hey, then, up go we!

If once the Anti-christian crew
  Be crushed and overthrown,
We'll teach the nobles how to stoop,
  And keep the gentry down.
Good manners have an ill report,
  And turn to pride, we see;
We'll therefore put good manners down,
  And hey, then, up go we!

Who would imagine that the man who wrote like that could be guilty of some of the passages we read in the 'Emblems'? Yet it is in that famous work* that we come upon such lines as these:

Rouse thee, my soul . . .
  Screw up the heightened pegs
Of thy sublime theorbo four notes higher.

And these:

Come, come, my soul, *hoist up thy higher sails,*
The wind blows fair.

And these:

Thou great Theanthropos, . . .
  O wink at human faults,
And through the slender conduit of my quill
Convey thy current.

It would seem as if on some occasions Quarles was unconsciously a humourist! The metaphors we quote read like parodies on the spasmodic poetry of our own time.

Cowley† was a wit, of course, but his witty ideas are so intermingled with his metaphysics that it is exceedingly difficult to disentangle them. One is obliged, therefore, to fall back upon his tolerably familiar 'Chronicle,' in which, as most people are aware, he recites the long list of those

* Printed in 1635.

† Abraham Cowley, born in 1618, died in 1667, was the author of more than one 'comedy,' *e.g. Naufragium Joculare* (1638) and *The Cutter of Coleman Street* (1663).

ladies who have from time to time held sway over his affections.* The piece is full of liveliness and go:

Margarita first possessed,
If I remember well, my breast,
  Margarita first of all;
But when awhile the wanton maid
With my restless heart had played,
  Martha took the flying ball.

Martha soon did it resign
To the beauteous Catherine;
  Beauteous Catherine gave place
(Tho' loth and angry she to part
With the possession of my heart)
  To Eliza's conquering face.

Eliza to this hour might reign
Had she not evil counsels ta'en:
  Fundamental laws she broke,
And still new favourites she chose,
Till up in arms my passions rose,
  And cast away her yoke.

Mary then, and gentle Anne,
Both to reign at once began;
  Alternately they swayed;
And sometimes Mary was the fair,
And sometimes Anne the crown did wear,
  And sometimes both I obeyed.

At last—after another Mary, and a Rebecca, and a Judith, and a Susanna, and an Isabella, and a Susan, and a Bess, and half-a-dozen others have been named—the poet comes to his 'present emperess:'

Heleonora, first o' the name,
Whom God grant long to reign!

O si sic omnes! This and two or three other lyrics, equally familiar, are really all of Cowley's poetical performances

* A living poet has done very much the same thing in one of his productions. See Mr. Austin Dobson's 'Pot-Pourri' (*Vignettes in Rhyme*).

which can now be read with pleasure—that is to say, without effort and without boredom.

We have a very different caterer in Robert Herrick*—Herrick, the Anacreon of England—who, with all his quaintness, is but rarely obscure, and is very often as clear and limpid as the most cherished of the moderns. His wit and humour are chiefly in the form of epigrams, though occasionally he ventures on a longer flight. Take, for example, these lines, in description of one of those mean hosts on whom the older epigrammatists delighted to pour the vitriol of their scorn. It is called 'The Invitation:'

To sup with thee thou didst me home invite,
And mad'st a promise that mine appetite
Should meet and tire on such lautitious meat,
The like not Heliogàbalus did eat;
And richer wine wouldst give to me, thy guest,
Than Roman Sylla poured out at his feast.
I came, 'tis true, and looked for fowl of price,
The bustard, phœnix, bird of paradise;
And for no less than aromatic wine
Of maiden's-blush commixed with jessamine.
Clean was the hearth, the mantel larded jet,
Which, wanting Lar and smoke, hung weeping wet.
At last, i' the noon of winter, did appear
A ragg'd soused neat's-foot with sick vinegar,
And in a burnished flagonet stood by
Beer small as comfort, dead as charity.
At which amazed, and pondering on the food—
How cold it was, and how it chilled my blood—
I cursed the master and I damned the souce,
And swore I'd got the ague of the house.
Well, when to eat thou dost me next desire,
I'll bring a fever, since thou keep'st no fire.

Herrick's epigrams are chiefly in the direction of personal characterisation. Here, for example, is his quatrain on a hunting parson:

* Born 1591, died 1674. The *Noble Numbers* appeared in 1647, the *Hesperides* in 1648.

Old Parson Beans hunts six days of the week,
And on the seventh he has his notes to seek;
Six days he halloas so much breath away
That on the seventh he can nor preach nor pray.

Here is his description of a stingy fellow, under the heading of 'The Gout in the Hand:'

Urles had the gout, so that he could not stand;
Then from his feet it shifted to his hand.
When it was in his feet his charity was small,
Now it is in his hand he gives no alms at all.

A hundred years after Herrick a portrait like this would have been expanded into a satire; nowadays it would be extended into a long-winded essay. Herrick was contented to produce his lines and leave them to be handed to posterity.

CHAPTER IV.

DRYDEN AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES.

The first great English Satirist—John Dryden—'Absalom and Achitophel'—'Mackflecknoe'—Epigrams—Samuel Butler—'Hudibras'—Lines on Holland—Andrew Marvell—Lines on Holland—John Phillips—'The Splendid Shilling'—Edmund Waller—Epigrams—William Walsh—'The Despairing Lover'—Epigram—Earl of Rochester—Epigrams—Earl of Dorset—'Lines Written at Sea'—Duke of Buckinghamshire—Epigrams—Sir Charles Sedley—Epigram.

CHAPTER IV.

DRYDEN AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES.

THE present chapter brings us at last into the presence of the first great English satirist—not the first English satirist, for we have seen that Wyatt, Donne, and Hall wrote satires—but essentially the first English satirist who was great. To pass, indeed, from Donne and Hall to Dryden* is like issuing from a badly-ventilated chamber into the fresh open air. Both in matter and in style the earlier writers were unhealthy and dull at the same time. They lived in a heavily-laden atmosphere, whilst Dryden breathed the breath of the strong winds of heaven. Whilst they were both rough and obscure, he was at once vigorous and flowing in his verse; and whilst they overwhelmed such ideas as they had in a mass of quibble or of metaphysics, he thought with clearness, observed with keenness, and clothed his thoughts and observations in the brightest wit imaginable. With Dryden as a *littérateur* generally we have nothing to do here. We may, however, ascribe something of the excellence of his satires to the fact that he was, unlike his predecessors, an accomplished man of letters—the earliest, indeed, of all the men who have made a living out of literature. Dryden was not only a verse writer; he was a prose writer, and the wielder of a style which combined variety and flexibility with strength. May we not take it for granted that his prose had a good effect upon his verse, and *vice versâ?* He wrote verse so powerfully, we may say, because his prose had inured him to the expression of his meaning with as much simplicity as vigour. Simplicity and vigour,—those are the qualities which mark Dry-

* John Dryden was born in 1631, and died in 1701. His *Absalom and Achitophel* appeared in 1681.

den's work in satire, and which give it so high a position in our literature. Well might Pope speak in this connection of 'long resounding march' and 'energy divine.' There is a swing as well as a power about Dryden's verse which differentiates it from all that went before it and all that has come after it. Dryden is notable, too, as being not only the first great satirist, but the first great personal satirist. His predecessors had set themselves very much to the belabouring of types of character and particular vices; they had been either general in their satire or had aimed their shafts only at embodiments of wrong and folly. Dryden inaugurated a new system, and one which, if eminently objectionable and disagreeable to contemporaries, is emphatically of interest and value to posterity. He assailed, not special vices, but particular persons, and endeavoured to discredit less the crimes or failings of the men who were guilty of them than the men themselves. His satire, consequently, has—apart altogether from its simplicity and its vigour—an effectiveness which no previous satiric work had had. No one in his time could fail to identify the individuals aimed at, or to be impressed by the castigation given to them, whilst posterity (admiring the literary merits of the performance) finds in it a useful guide to the study of character and of history. *Absalom and Achitophel* is in this sense a contribution to history as well as to literature.* It is not only an admirable work of art; it has an intrinsic usefulness besides. It is unquestionably the greatest of the author's efforts. Not even Pope—certainly neither Gifford nor yet Byron—has bequeathed to us personal satire of so biting and discerning a description. The leading politicians of the time stand before us in all the nakedness of an exposed personality. Their minds and characters lie unclothed before us. They are famous in their own despite. Who does not remember the description of Shaftesbury as Achitophel?

> For close designs and crooked counsels fit,
> Sagacious, bold, and turbulent of wit,

* It was replied to, somewhat vigorously, by Samuel Pordage, in his *Azaria and Hushai.*

Restless, unfixed in principles and place,
In power unpleased, impatient of disgrace, ...
In friendship false, implacable in hate,
Resolved to ruin or to rule the state.
To compass this the triple bond he broke,
The pillars of the public safety shook,
And fitted [England] for a foreign yoke;
Then, seized with fear, yet still affecting fame,
Usurped a patriot's all-atoning name.
So easy still it proves, in factious times,
With public zeal to cancel private crimes;
How safe is treason, and how sacred ill,
Where none can sin against the people's will!
Where crowds can wink and no offence be known,
Since on another's guilt they found their own!

Dryden's portrait of the Duke of Buckingham as Zimri is still better remembered; yet it is so masterly that it would be unpardonable not to give at least a portion of it:

A man so various that he seemed to be
Not one, but all mankind's epitome;
Stiff in opinion, always in the wrong,
Was everything by starts, and nothing long;
But in the course of one revolving moon
Was chemist, fiddler, statesman, and buffoon. . . .
Railing and praising were his usual themes,
And both, to show his judgment, in extremes;
So over-violent or over-civil
That every man with him was god or devil.
In squandering wealth was his peculiar art:
Nothing went unrewarded but desert.

Powerful as this is, however, we doubt whether Dryden did not surpass it in absolute and crushing bitterness in his masterly demolishing of the 'poet' Shadwell, whom Flecknoe had set up as the satirist's rival:

All human things are subject to decay,
And when Fate summons monarchs must obey.

This Flecknoe found, who, like Augustus, young
Was called to empire, and had governed long;
In prose and verse was owned, without dispute,
Through all the realms of nonsense, absolute.
This aged prince, now flourishing in peace,
And blest with issue of a large increase,
Worn out with business, did at length debate
To settle the succession of the state;
And pondering which of all his sons was fit
To reign, and wage immortal war with Wit,
Cried, 'Tis resolved, for Nature pleads, that he
Should only rule who most resembles me.
Shadwell alone my perfect image bears,
Mature in dullness from his tender years;
Shadwell alone, of all my sons, was he
Who stands confirmed in full stupidity.
The rest to some faint meaning make pretence;
But Shadwell never deviates into sense.
Some beams of wit on other souls may fall,
Strike through, and make a lucid interval;
But Shadwell's genuine night admits no ray;
His rising fogs prevail upon the day.
Besides, his goodly fabric fills the eye,
And seems designed for thoughtless majesty—
Thoughtless as monarch oaks, that shade the plain,
And, spread in solemn state, supinely reign.
Heywood and Shirley were but types of thee,
Thou last great prophet of tautology.

This, to our mind, is better than the laboured—though polished and witty—antithesis of Pope. It is possible, of course, to enjoy the work of both these masters of their art, but certainly for vigorousness of satire the elder ranks higher than the younger writer.

Dryden did little in epigram, or at any rate but little is preserved. It is well known that he was unhappy in his marriage, and it is not surprising, therefore, that he should have penned this 'Epitaph intended for his Wife:'

Here lies my wife: here let her lie!
Now she's at rest, and so am I.

As an adherent of King James II. he was naturally ill-disposed towards King William III., and it is equally natural that he should satirise him. Certain it is that, when Jacob Tonson insisted upon adorning the title-page of Dryden's *Æneid* with a portrait of King William as Æneas, the poet (remembering how Æneas carried his father Anchises from the burning Troy, and how William had driven his father-in-law from England) wrote as follows:

> Old Jacob, in his wondrous mood,
> To please the wise beholders,
> Has placed old Nassau's hook-nosed head
> On poor Æneas' shoulders:
>
> To make the parallel hold tack,
> Methinks there's something lacking;
> One took his father pick-a-back,
> The other sent his packing.

This reference to Tonson and to Dryden's Virgilian translation reminds us of a fact in reference to both, which illustrates the poet's wonderful capacity for personal satire. Tonson had declined to give for the translation the sum which Dryden asked for it; whereupon the latter sat down and scribbled off the following pen-portrait of the bookseller:

> With leering looks, bull-faced, and freckled fair,
> With two left legs, and Judas-coloured hair,
> With frowsy pores that taint the ambient air.

This he sent to the unhappy subject of it, with the remark that he who made it could make more of it; and it need scarcely be recorded that the bookseller, in fear and trembling, readily promised what he had before refused.

Dryden would have reigned undisputed as *facile princeps* among the poets of his time but for the presence among them of Samuel Butler, whose fame as the author of *Hudibras** is scarcely less wide and deep, if at all, than that of the author of *Absalom and Achitophel*. In some respects Butler was the direct opposite of Dryden. Butler

* Published in 1663, 1664, and 1678. Butler died in 1680.

was a satirist, but, unlike Dryden, he was the assailer of a party and of types, rather than of particular individuals. His great performance was a fierce attack upon the Puritanism of his day, and Sir Hudibras, though an inimitable bit of character portrait-painting, is, after all, not so much a person as an embodiment in one man of all the peculiar characteristics with which Butler thought proper to endow the Puritans. Again, whilst Dryden's style was forcible and limpid, Butler's, though exceedingly effective in its way, is somewhat rugged and involved, rambling on without much attention being paid to 'form,' so long as the author managed to beat out his meaning. Much of Butler's merit, again, consists in the happy eccentricity of his rhyming, which is, in many instances, as remarkable as anything that Barham* ever did. Much, too, consists in the no less happy sententiousness of the opinions put forward, —in the simple unostentatious way in which the writer expresses himself, both in comment and description. Butler's downright manner is, indeed, either the perfection of premeditated art, or the spontaneous outcome of a naturally downright nature. And we are the more disposed to adopt the first hypothesis, because in his other, and his lesser works, the poet (if he can be called a poet) is by no means so vigorous or so humorous as in his principal production. In the latter there is ample room for much and varied quotation; still, as is to be anticipated, the very best passages are those with which the public has been all along well acquainted. Take, for example, this *résumé* of Sir Hudibras' accomplishments:

> Our authors make a doubt,
> Whether he were more wise or stout;
> Some hold the one, and some the other:
> But howsoe'er they make a pother,
> The difference was so small, his brain
> Outweighed his rage but half a grain;
> Which made some take him for a tool
> That knaves do work with, called a fool.

* Author of *The Ingoldsby Legends*.

For't has been held by many, that
As Montaigne, playing with his cat,
Complains she thought him but an ass,
Much more she would Sir Hudibras,
(For that's the name our valiant knight
To all his challenges did write).
But they're mistaken very much;
'Tis plain enough he was no such;
We grant, although he had much wit,
He was very shy of using it;
As being loath to wear it out,
And therefore bore it not about,
Unless on holidays, or so,
As men their best apparel do;
Besides, 'tis known he could speak Greek
As naturally as pigs squeak;
That Latin was no more difficile,
Than to a blackbird 'tis to whistle.
Being rich in both, he never scanted
His bounty unto such as wanted;
But much of either would afford
To many that had not one word. . . .

Take this again:

He was in logic a great critic,
Profoundly skilled in analytic.
He could distinguish, and divide
A hair 'twixt south and south-west side;
On either which he would dispute,
Confute, change hands, and still confute
He'd undertake to prove by force
Of argument a man's no horse;
He'd prove a buzzard is no fowl,
And that a lord may be an owl,
A calf an alderman, a goose a justice,
And rooks committee-men and trustees;
He'd run in debt by disputation,
And pay with ratiocination.

All this by syllogism, true
In mood and figure, he would do.
For rhetoric, he could not ope
His mouth but out there flew a trope;
And when he happened to break off
I' th' middle of his speech, or cough,
H' had hard words ready to show why,
And tell what rules he did it by:
Else, when with greatest art he spoke,
You'd think he talked like other folk;
For all a rhetorician's rules
Teach nothing but to name his tools.
But, when he pleased to show't, his speech
In loftiness of sound was rich:
A Babylonish dialect,
Which learned pedants much affect;
It was a party-coloured dress
Of patched and piebald languages;
'Twas English cut on Greek and Latin,
Like fustian heretofore on satin.
It had an odd promiscuous tone,
As if he talked three parts in one;
Which made some think when he did gabble,
Th' had heard three labourers of Babel,
Or Cerberus himself pronounce
A leash of languages at once.

And this:

For his religion, it was fit
To match his learning and his wit.
'Twas Presbyterian true-blue;
For he was of that stubborn crew
Of errant saints, whom all men grant
To be the true church militant;
Such as do build their faith upon
The holy text of pike and gun;
Decide all controversy by
Infallible artillery;
And prove their doctrine orthodox
By apostolic blows and knocks;

Call fire and sword and desolation
A godly thorough reformation,
Which always must be carried on,
And still be doing, never done;
As if religion were intended
For nothing else but to be mended;
A sect whose chief devotion lies
In odd perverse antipathies;
In falling out with that and this,
And finding somewhat still amiss;
More peevish, cross, and splenetic
Than dog distraught or monkey sick;
That with more care keep holiday
The wrong than others the right way;
Compound for sins they are inclined to,
By damning those they have no mind to.

It is noticeable that the poets of Dryden's day were never weary of attacking the Dutch, who, after their disasters at the hands of Blake, had under the second Charles resumed, in some degree, the empire of the seas. Dryden himself has a short satire on the subject of Holland and its people; and the most effective of all Butler's smaller pieces is devoted to the same congenial topic. The humorous exaggeration of the following is, indeed, most exquisite:

A country that draws fifty foot of water,
In which men live as in the hold of Nature;
And when the sea does in upon them break,
And drown a province, does but spring a leak;
That always ply the pump, and never think
They can be safe but at the rate they sink;
That live as if they had been run aground,
And when they die are cast away and drowned;
That dwell in ships, like swarms of rats, and prey
Upon the goods all other nations' fleets convey;
And when their merchants are blown up and cracked,
Whole towns are cast away in storms and wrecked;
That feed, like cannibals, on other fishes,
And serve their cousin-Germans up in dishes.

A land that rides at anchor, and is moored;
In which they do not live, but go aboard.

Compare this with the lines which Andrew Marvell wrote upon the unhappy Hollander—lines much more numerous than those of Butler, and certainly not less admirable in their essential qualities. Indeed, did we not know that Butler's lines were not published in Marvell's lifetime, we might be inclined to suspect the latter writer of conscious or unconscious plagiarism, the similarity of idea and of style is so very great:*

Holland, that scarce deserves the name of land,
As but the offscouring of the British sand,
And so much earth as was contributed
By English pilots when they heaved the lead,
Or what by the ocean's slow alluvion fell,
Of shipwrecked cockle and the mussel-shell,—
This indigested vomit of the sea
Fell to the Dutch by just propriety.
Glad then, as miners who have found the ore,
They, with mad labour, fished the land to shore,
And dived as desperately for each piece
Of earth as if 't had been of ambergreece;
Collecting anxiously small loads of clay,
Less than what building swallows bear away,
Or than those pills which sordid beetles roll,
Transfusing into them their dunghill soul.
How did they rivet, with gigantic piles,
Thorough the centre their new-catchèd miles,
And to the stake a struggling country bound
Where barking waves still bait the forcèd ground;
Building their watery Babel far more high,
To reach the sea, than those to reach the sky!
Yet still this claim the injur'd ocean laid,
And oft at leapfrog o'er their steeples played . . .
The fish oft-times the burgher dispossessed,
And sat, not as a meat, but as a guest,

* Marvell died in 1678.

And oft the Tritons and the sea-nymphs saw
Whole shoals of Dutch served up for cabillau;
Or, as they over the new level ranged,
For pickled herring pickled heeren changed . . .
Nature, it seemed, ashamed of her mistake,
Would throw their land away at duck and drake:
Therefore necessity, that first made kings,
Something like government among them brings.
For as with pygmies, who best kills the crane,
Among the hungry he that treasures grain,
Among the blind the one-eyed blinkard reigns,
So rules among the drownèd he that drains.
Not who first see the rising sun commands,
But who could first discern the rising lands . . .
To make a bank was a great plot of state;
Invent a shovel, and be a magistrate.
'Tis probable religion, after this,
Came next in order; which they could not miss.
How could the Dutch but be converted when
The Apostles were so many fishermen?
Besides, the waters of themselves did rise,
And, as their land, so them did re-baptise.

This is admirable fooling, though apart from this one effort I did not know that humourist is a title to which Marvell could lay claim.

Perhaps, after Dryden and Butler, the palm for wit and humour, both combined, should be awarded, in this period, to John Philips, who, though he died eight years after Dryden, was nevertheless, for more than twenty years, contemporary with him. This writer's chief performance was a long piece of verse, entitled *The Splendid Shilling*, and written throughout in imitation of the majestic style of Milton. The work deserves attention, not only on account of its intrinsic merits, which are great, but on account of its being probably the first poetic parody in the English language. The drama had its parodies before in the instances of *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, and of Buckingham's *Rehearsal* (produced in 1671); but poetry had

hitherto escaped—save in snatches such as we find here and there in Shakespeare—the honour or the ignominy (as you like to look at it) of elaborate travesty. Hence the wonder is not only that Philips should have the courage to essay this new form of wit and humour, but that, in the absence of what could be absolutely called a model, he should have been able to succeed so well. The balanced periods of Milton are admirably copied, and into the description of the poet's thoughts and feelings an immense amount of quiet drollery is infused. Assuredly the name of Philips ought to be better known and more highly honoured as it is by those who hold parody to be one of the most legitimate and effective of all forms of fun.

The Splendid Shilling begins thus:

> Happy the man who, void of cares and strife,
> In silken or in leathern purse retains
> A Splendid Shilling. He nor hears with pain
> New oysters cried, nor sighs for cheerful ale;
> But with his friends, when nightly mists arise,
> To Juniper's Magpie or town-hall repairs;
> Where, mindful of the nymph whose wanton eye
> Transfixed his soul and kindled amorous flames,
> Chloe or Phillis, he each circling glass
> Wisheth her health, and joy, and equal love.
> Meanwhile, he smokes, and laughs at merry tale,
> Or pun ambiguous, or conundrum quaint.
> But I, whom griping Penury surrounds,
> And Hunger, sure attendant upon Want,
> With scanty offals and small acid tiff
> (Wretched repast!) my meagre corpse sustain;
> Then solitary walk, or doze at home
> In garret vile, and with a warming puff
> Regale chilled fingers; or, from tub as black
> As winter-chimney or well-polished jet,
> Exhale mundungus, ill-perfuming scent!

From this the writer goes on to describe the misery he endures in the course of a visit from a dun:

Thus while my joyless minutes tedious flow,
With looks demure and silent pace, a Dun—
Horrible monster, hated by gods and men—
To my aërial citadel ascends.
With vocal heel thrice thundering at my gate,
With hideous accent thrice he calls; I know
The voice ill-boding, and the solemn sound.
What should I do? or whither turn? Amazed,
Confounded, to the dark recess I fly
Of wood-hole; straight my bristling hair's erect
Through sudden fear; a chilly sweat bedews
My shuddering limbs, and, wonderful to tell!
My tongue forgets her faculty of speech;
So horrible he seems! His faded brow,
Entrenched with many a frown, and conic beard,
And spreading band admired by modern saints,
Disastrous acts forbode; in his right hand
Long scrolls of paper solemnly he waves,
With characters and figures dire inscribed,
Grievous to mortal eyes; ye gods, avert
Such plagues from righteous men!

After some warning to unwary debtors, lest, in their walks abroad, they be waylaid by that enemy of their race, the sheriff's officer, the poet proceeds:

So pass my days. But when nocturnal shades
This world envelop, and the inclement air
Persuades men to repel benumbing frosts
With pleasant wines, and crackling blaze of wood;
Me, lonely sitting, nor the glimmering light
Of make-weight candle, nor the joyous talk
Of loving friend, delights. Distressed, forlorn,
Amidst the horrors of the tedious night,
Darkling I sigh, and feed with dismal thoughts
My anxious mind; or sometimes mournful verse
Indite, and sing of groves and myrtle shade,
Or desperate lady near a purling stream,
Or lover pendent on a willow-tree.
Meanwhile I labour with eternal drought,

And restless wish and rave; my parchèd throat
Finds no relief, nor heavy eyes repose.
But, if a slumber haply does invade
My weary limbs, my fancy's still awake,
Thoughtful of drink, and, eager in a dream,
Tipples imaginary pots of ale.

Then, finally:

Thus do I live, from pleasure quite debarred,
Nor taste the fruits that the sun's genial rays
Mature; John-apple, nor the downy peach,
Nor walnut in rough-furrowed coat secure,
Nor medlar, fruit delicious in decay.
Afflictions great! Yet greater still remain.
My galligaskins, that have long withstood
The winter's fury and encroaching frosts,
By time subdued (what will not time subdue?)
An horrid chasm disclosed, with orifice
Wide, discontinuous; at which the winds
Eurus and Auster, and the dreadful force
Of Boreas that congeals the Cronian waves,
Tumultuous enter with dire chilly blasts,
Portending agues.

It says much—does it not?—for those not very secure or agreeable times, that so pleasant a *jeu d'esprit* as the above should have been produced within them.

We come now, lastly—before passing on to a period more prolific in verse of the kind we seek—to refer, but briefly, to a small army of men of fashion in the time of Dryden, who contributed occasionally and not unsuccessfully to the poetry of wit and humour.

And first of all let us make the acquaintance of Edmund Waller, then, as now, an admired author of familiar verse, and especially notable as the producer of the celebrated lines 'Upon a Girdle.' Waller was more at home in elegant little trifles of this sort than in works of a distinctly humorous or satiric character; yet he has left behind him a few noteworthy specimens of the latter kind, which

entitle him to recognition in this volume. The following epigram, 'On a Painted Lady with Ill Teeth,' is evidently the production of a bilious moment:

Were men so dull they could not see
That Lycè painted,—should they flee,
Like simple birds, into a net
So grossly woven and ill set,—
Her own teeth would undo the knot,
And let all go that she had got.

Those teeth fair Lycè must not show
If she would bite; her lovers, though
Like birds they stoop at seeming grapes,
Are disabused when first she gapes;
The rotten bones discovered there
Show 'tis a painted sepulchre.

Contrast this with these courtly lines 'On a Lady who writ in Praise of Myra:'

While she pretends to make the graces known
Of matchless Myra, she reveals her own:
And when she would another's praise indite
Is by her glass instructed how to write.

There is surely as true wit in this little effort towards compliment as there is in the above exhibition of ill-nature.

Pope has borne testimony to the critical acuteness of William Walsh, who, he confesses, 'taught him how to write.' Walsh was esteemed in his day both as a critic and a poet, and as a poet he still deserves to be remembered. His works yield at any rate at least one amusing piece, which he entitled 'The Despairing Lover:'

Distracted with care
For Phyllis the fair;
Since nothing could move her,
Poor Damon, her lover,
Resolves in despair
No longer to languish
Nor bear so much anguish;

But, mad with his love,
To a precipice goes,
Where a leap from above
Would soon finish his woes.

When in rage he came there,
Beholding how steep
The side did appear,
And the bottom how deep;
His torments projecting,
And sadly reflecting
That a lover forsaken
A new love may get,
But a neck, when once broken,
Can never be set;

And that he could die
Whenever he would,
But that he could live
But as long as he could:
How grievous soever
The torment might grow,
He scorned to endeavour
To finish it so.
But bold, unconcerned
At thoughts of the pain,
He calmly returned
To his cottage again.

Walsh is also responsible for an excellent imitation of one of Martial's epigrams:

Thraso picks quarrels when he's drunk at night;
When sober in the morning dares not fight.
Thraso, to shun those ills that may ensue,
Drink not at night, or drink at morning too.

Walsh and Waller were both members of Parliament at one period of their career, and moved undoubtedly in good society. Still, we suppose they must yield the palm in aristocratic standing, if not in ability, to such sprigs of the nobility and gentry as the Earls of Rochester and Dorset, the

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Duke of Buckinghamshire and Sir Charles Sedley. These gentlemen belonged to the 'mob' who 'wrote with ease,' and, though the major portion of their productions consisted of amatory lyrics, they now and then gave forth a *jeu d'esprit* not unworthy of their reputation for sprightliness of wit. Thus, Rochester was the author of the well-known lines on Charles II. (written on his bedroom-door):

Here lies our sovereign lord the king,
Whose word no man relies on;
Who never says a foolish thing,
Nor ever did a wise one.

He was also the producer of this epigram 'On a Miser's Dinner:'

Thanks for this miracle! it is no less
Than finding manna in the wilderness!
In midst of famine we have had relief,
And seen the wonder of a chine of beef!
Chimneys have smok'd that never smok'd before,
And we have din'd—where we shall dine no more.

Dorset will always remain in the memory of cultivated Englishmen, if only on account of the high spirits shown by him in the famous verses stated to have been written at sea during the Dutch war of 1665. The lines are not especially witty, but they have at least vivacity and a merry turn of style:

To all ye ladies now at land
We men at sea indite,
But first would have you understand
How hard it is to write.
The Muses now, and Neptune too,
We must implore to write to you.
With a fa, la, la, la, la.

For though the Muses should prove kind,
And fill our empty brain,
Yet if rough Neptune rouse the wind
To wave the azure main,
Our paper, pen, and ink, and we
Roll up and down our ships at sea.

Then if we write not by each post
  Think not we are unkind;
Nor yet conclude our ships are lost,
  By Dutchmen or by wind.
Our tears we'll send a speedier way—
The tide shall bring them twice a day.

The king, with wonder and surprise,
  Will near the seas grow bold,
Because the tides will higher rise
  Than e'er they used of old.
But let him know, it is our tears
Bring floods of grief to Whitehall stairs. . . .

To pass our tedious hours away
  We throw a merry main,
Or else at serious ombre play:
  But why should we in vain
Each other's ruin thus pursue?
We were undone when we left you.

But now our fears tempestuous grow,
  And cast our hopes away;
Whilst you, regardless of our woe,
  Sit careless at a play;
Perhaps permit some happier man
To kiss your hand or flirt your fan. . . .

And now we've told you all our loves,
  And likewise all our fears,
In hopes this declaration moves
  Some pity from your tears,
Let's hear of no inconstancy—
We have too much of that at sea.
  With a fa, la, la, la, la.

John Sheffield, Duke of Buckinghamshire, wrote a certain poem called *The Vision*, which he doubtless thought his best achievement. As it happens, his minor songs and other lyrics are much more highly thought of. Some of his epigrams are by no means without point. Take, for example,

this political one, written against the Ministry which was in power in 1707 :

Merit they hate, and wit they slight,
They neither act nor reason right,
And nothing mind but pence.
Unskilful they victorious are,
Conduct a kingdom without care,
A council without sense.

So Moses once, and Joshua,
And that virago Deborah,
Bestrid poor Israel.
Like reverence pay to these ; for who
Could ride a nation as they do
Without a miracle ?

This idea of putting up with things because they were permitted by Providence seems to have been a favourite one with Buckinghamshire, who on another occasion wrote these lines upon a man that he disliked :

Here lies a man who, by relation,
Depends upon predestination ;
For which the learned and the wise
His understanding much despise.

But I pronounce, with loyal tongue,
Him in the right, them in the wrong ;
For how should such a wretch succeed
But that, alas ! it was decreed ?

Lastly, let us hear Sir Charles Sedley—Sedley, whose Muse generally was as unchaste as his daily life, but who wrote, nevertheless, some very pure and very charming things—let us hear Sir Charles Sedley in a quatrain directed against King William III. :

The author, sure, must take great pains
Who fairly writes the story,
In which of these two last campaigns
Was gained the greatest glory.

For while he march'd on to the fight,
  Like hero nothing fearing,
Namur was taken in his sight,
  And Mons within his hearing.

This is not fair, or true, but it is smart, and neat.

CHAPTER V.

POPE AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES.

Alexander Pope—'The Rape of the Lock'—The 'Moral Essays'—The 'Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot'—Epigrams—Jonathan Swift—Epigrams—The 'Journal of a Modern Lady'—'The Furniture of a Woman's Mind'—John Gay—'Elegy on a Lap-Dog'—'To a Lady on Her Passion for Old China'—The 'Song of Similes'—Matthew Prior—Epigrams—William Congreve—Lines on Amoret—Epigrams—Lady Mary Wortley Montagu—'The Lover'—A Lady in the Country—Lord Lyttelton—Lines—Thomas Tickell—'On a Woman of Fashion'—John Bramston—'The Man of Taste'—'The Art of Politics'—Matthew Green—Epigram—Allan Ramsay—Epigrams.

CHAPTER V.

POPE AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES.

As we proceed farther and farther down the stream of English wit and humour, we find it gradually expanding, until it becomes more and more difficult for the voyager to see the shores which bound it on each side. There is a wider space, and also a richer area, to cover with our gaze; and it takes one longer even to glance round and make one's hurried notes than it has done before. Especially do we feel this when, after leaving the company of Dryden and Butler and their courtly and polished contemporaries, we come into that of Pope and the men and women who stand round about him. The eighteenth century, even more than the seventeenth, becomes too unwieldy for a single chapter, and we are forced to regard the author of *The Dunciad* and his fellows apart from Goldsmith and the writers of his day. There are, in fact, more than one reason why we should do so; and foremost among them is the difference of style and (generally) of subject. Pope and his contemporaries were essentially poets of the artificial; their satire is satire of society, and is, for the most part, as starched in character as were the manners of the period. Pope, Swift, Prior, Gay, and Congreve—all occupied themselves in strictures on the follies of fine ladies and gentlemen, and couched those strictures usually in terms as polished as the habits of their victims. Pope especially is the satirist, *par excellence*, of the *beau monde;* he is also a personal satirist who, in absolute perfection of expression, surpasses even Dryden; but he is, on the whole, greatest as the poet of *haut ton*. His *Dunciad* is a wonderful monument to the wit and skill, as well as the littleness of nature, of the writer; but *The Rape of the Lock* is unquestionably the more thoroughly admirable and wonderful of the two. It is perfect as a work of art. None of Pope's performances can surpass it

for form, style, and wit—the first is so beautifully mature, the second so exquisitely fitting, and the third so brightly lambent. The whole poem is so perfectly in keeping. Everything in it is proportioned to the motive, which, it is well known, was nothing more serious than 'the rape of a lock' of hair from the head of a lady of fashion. The opening is felicitous in itself:

> Say what strange motive, Goddess, could compel
> A well-bred lord t' assault a gentle belle?
> O say what stranger cause, yet unexplored,
> Could make a gentle belle reject a lord?

The fairy machinery which Pope adopted at the suggestion of Garth is managed with consummate ease and grace. Thus are the powers of the gnomes and sylphs enumerated:

> Some nymphs there are, too conscious of their face,
> For life predestin'd to the gnomes' embrace.
> These swell their prospects and exalt their pride,
> When offers are disdain'd and love denied;
> Then gay ideas crowd the vacant brain,
> While peers, and dukes, and all their sweeping train,
> And garters, stars, and coronets appear,
> And in soft sounds Your Grace salutes their ear.
> 'Tis these that early taint the female soul,
> Instruct the eyes of young coquettes to roll,
> Teach infant cheeks a hidden blush to know,
> And little hearts to flutter at a beau.
> Oft, when the world imagines women stray,
> The sylphs thro' mystic mazes guide their way; . . .
> With varying vanities, from every part,
> They shift the moving toyshop of their heart;
> Where wigs with wigs, with sword-knots sword-knots strive,
> Beaus banish beaus, and coaches coaches drive.
> This erring mortals levity may call;
> O blind to truth! the sylphs contrive it all.

Then, in the second canto, we come upon the origin of the poem. Belinda, the heroine, having been sketched for us while at her toilet, we learn that

This nymph, to the destruction of mankind,
Nourish'd two locks, which graceful hung behind
In equal curls, and well conspir'd to deck
With shining ringlets the smooth iv'ry neck.
Love in these labyrinths his slaves detains,
And mighty hearts are held in tender chains.

One heart at least is held in them:

The adventurous baron the bright locks admir'd;
He saw, he wish'd, and to the prize aspir'd.
Resolv'd to win he meditates the way,
By force to ravish, or by fraud betray.

Thus does he invoke the aid of the supernal powers:

For this, ere Phœbus rose, he had implor'd
Propitious heav'n, and ev'ry pow'r ador'd,
But chiefly Love—to Love an altar built,
Of twelve vast French romances, neatly gilt.
There lay three garters, half a pair of gloves;
And all the trophies of his former loves;
With tender billets doux he lights the pyre,
And breathes three am'rous sighs to raise the fire.
Then prostrate falls, and begs with ardent eyes
Soon to obtain, and long possess, the prize.

In exactly the same strain the poet tells how the adventurous baron succeeded in his aim, and of the events which followed—never varying from the pitch of delicate raillery and persiflage with which the poem opened. Never before, in fact, was such exquisite poetic filigree constructed. English literature had never known a wit so keen, a touch so light, a sense of fitness so complete.

This, then, is the greatest of Pope's merits—that he was, in the first place, a supreme master of the art of persiflage, and that he worked in that art for the first time among English authors. It must be confessed, however, that it is hardly in this light and character that he is generally and popularly regarded. Next to being an inventor of phrases, lines, and couplets, which have almost the currency of proverbs, Pope is recognised as the most polished and bitter of

the personal satirists—not nearly so vigorous, so far as powerful impression goes, as Dryden or as Byron, but incomparably more artistic, more elaborate, more finished. From one point of view, to be sure, the reputation is not one which Pope—if he knows nowadays what reputation is—need be anxious to secure or to retain. Not only the *Dunciad*, but the *Moral Essays*, and the miscellaneous satires, owe nearly all their interest to Pope's attacks upon enemies or rivals—attacks to which most of them had no opportunity of replying. If the *Dunciad* is a testimony to Pope's satiric wit, it is a testimony also to his meanness of character; and if his other portraits, such as those in the *Moral Essays* and the *Epistle to Arbuthnot*, are immensely popular, it is assuredly only by reason of their cleverness, not of their truth or of their generosity. For our own part we prefer both the *Essays* and the *Satires* to the *Dunciad*, which, able as it is, is sometimes dreary, and has to do, moreover, with a large number of nameless creatures of whom the present and succeeding generations cannot take account. As a personal satirist, Pope is seen best certainly in the less known works. It is in the *Moral Essays* that he describes Atossa (the Duchess of Buckingham):

> Offend her, and she knows not to forgive;
> Oblige her, and she'll hate you while you live;
> But die, and she'll adore you;—

Chloe (the Countess of Suffolk):

> Content to dwell in decencies for ever;—

Narcissa (the Duchess of Hamilton), who,

> Tolerably mild,
> To make a wash would hardly stew a child;—

and that other Narcissa (Mrs. Oldfield):

> 'Odious! in woollen! 'twould a saint provoke!'
> (Were the last words that poor Narcissa spoke.)
> 'No, let a charming chintz and Brussels lace
> Wrap my cold limbs and shade my lifeless face—
> One would not, sure, be frightful when one's dead—
> And, Betty, give this cheek a little red.'

In the *Epistle to Arbuthnot* we come across the most admired and most admirable of his portraits—those of Atticus (Addison), Bufo (Lord Halifax), and Sporus (Lord Hervey). Not even Dryden could write with such concentrated malignity as we find in this perversion of the character of Addison:

> Should such a man, too fond to rule alone,
> Bear, like the Turk, no brother near the throne,
> View him with scornful, yet with jealous, eyes,
> And hate for arts that caus'd himself to rise;
> Damn with faint praise, assent with civil leer,
> And without sneering, teach the rest to sneer;
> Willing to wound, and yet afraid to strike,
> Just hint a fault, and hesitate dislike;
> Alike reserv'd to blame, or to commend,
> A tim'rous foe, and a suspicious friend;
> Dreading ev'n fools, by flatterers besieg'd,
> And so obliging, that he ne'er oblig'd;*
> Like Cato, give his little senate laws,
> And sit attentive to his own applause;
> While wits and Templars ev'ry sentence raise,
> And wonder with a foolish face of praise:
> Who but must laugh, if such a man there be?
> Who would not weep, if Atticus were he?

This can only be matched, if matched at all, by the tirade against Lord Hervey:

> Let Sporus tremble.—*A.* What? that thing of silk,
> Sporus, that mere white-curd of ass's milk?
> Satire or sense, alas! can Sporus feel?
> Who breaks a butterfly upon a wheel?
> *P.* Yet let me flap this bug with gilded wings,
> This painted child of dirt, that stinks and stings;
> Whose buzz the witty and the fair annoys,
> Yet wit ne'er tastes, and beauty ne'er enjoys;
> So well-bred spaniels civilly delight
> In mumbling of the game they dare not bite.

* Pronounced 'obleeged.'

Eternal smiles his emptiness betray,
As shallow streams run dimpling all the way.
Whether in florid impotence he speaks,
And as the prompter breathes, the puppet squeaks;
Or at the ear of Eve, familiar toad,
Half froth, half venom, spits himself abroad,
In puns, or politics, or tales, or lies,
Or spite, or smut, or rhymes, or blasphemies.
His wit all see-saw, between *that* and *this*,
Now high, now low, now master up, now miss,
And he himself one vile antithesis.

It so happens that the characteristic last referred to in this passage is about the only true one of the whole; whilst the analysis of Addison's personality is well known to be wholly false or grossly exaggerated. That, however, is hardly of interest to the mere student of literature, who, with all abatements made, cannot but acknowledge the marvellous effectiveness—despite the somewhat monotonous, hard style—of Pope's satiric sketches. Those sketches might be more easy and more graceful and more varied, but they could hardly be more witty or more pointed or more antithetical—in fact, more biting.

The reader to whom Pope's works are not familiar must not, however, be left under the impression that his wit was invariably unkind towards its subject. There can be wit in compliment as well as wit in satire. The man who could hurl his spite at Addison and Hervey could write most charmingly about such of his friends and acquaintances as had the good fortune to be in his good graces. Take, for example, the epitaph on Godfrey Kneller; take the lines addressed to Lady Wortley Montagu; take (if they are Pope's—according to Spence they are by Young) the couplet said to have been written on a pane of glass with Chesterfield's diamond pencil:

Accept a miracle instead of wit;
See one dull line by Stanhope's pencil writ.

It is only fair to say that if the *Moral Essays* and the

Satires are distinguished by satirical abuse, they are also characterised by many examples of felicitous praise.

Before passing from Pope's works to Swift's, we may give a specimen or two of the former's most bitter epigrams. Take this, for instance, on the Duke of Grafton's appointment of Colley Cibber to the poet-laureateship :

Tell, if you can, which did the worse,
Caligula or Grafton's Grace?
That made a consul of a horse,
And this a laureate of an ass.

This, also, on Bentley's edition of Milton's *Paradise Lost :*

Did Milton's prose, O Charles, thy death defend?
A furious foe unconscious proves a friend.
On Milton's verse does Bentley comment? Know
A weak officious friend becomes a foe:
While he but sought his author's fame to further,
The murderous critic has avenged thy murder.

Again :

You beat your pate, and fancy wit will come.
Knock as you please—there's nobody at home.

Lastly, this on an unfortunate opera-singer :

So bright is thy beauty, so charming thy song,
As had drawn both the beasts and their Orpheus along;
But such is thy av'rice and such is thy pride
That the beasts must have starved and the poet have died.

Swift had the knack of epigram as well as Pope, and has left behind him some excellent work in that department. Take this 'On seeing a Worthy Prelate go out of Church, in Time of Divine Service, to wait on the Duke of Dorset on his coming to Town :'

Lord Pam in the church (could you think it?) kneel'd down.
When told that the Duke was just come to town—
His station despising, unaw'd by the place,
He flies from his God to attend on his Grace.

To the Court it was fitter to pay his devotion,
Since God had no hand in his lordship's promotion.

And this, 'Written on a Window at Chester:'

The church and clergy here, no doubt,
Are very near akin;
Both weather-beaten are without,
And empty both within.

Take this, also, in which the Dean's cynicism is very agreeably exhibited:

As Thomas was cudgell'd one day by his wife,
He took to the street and fled for his life:
Tom's three dearest friends came by in the squabble,
And saved him at once from the shrew and the rabble:
Then ventured to give him some sober advice;
But Tom is a person of honour so nice—
Too wise to take counsel, too proud to take warning,
That he sent to all three a challenge next morning.
Three duels he fought, thrice ventured his life,
Went home and was cudgell'd again by his wife.

In the following lines, addressed to a married lady, we see that Swift, like Pope, could be very complaisant when he chose:

You always are making a god of your spouse,
But this neither reason nor conscience allows.
Perhaps you will say, 'tis in gratitude due,
And you adore him because he adores you.
Your argument's weak, and so you will find:
For you, by this rule, must adore all mankind.

How graceful, too, is this, on the subject of a young lady, by name Biddy Floyd!—

When Cupid did his grandsire Jove entreat
To form some beauty by a new receipt,
Jove sent, and found far in a country scene
Truth, innocence, good-nature, look serene:

From which ingredients first the dexterous boy
Pick'd the demure, the awkward, and the coy.
The Graces from the Court did next provide
Breeding and wit and air and decent pride:
These Venus clears from every spurious grain
Of vice, coquet, affected, pert, and vain.
Jove mix'd up all, and his best clay employ'd;
Then call'd the happy composition *Floyd*.

For the rest, it must be confessed that Swift's verse is not particularly pleasant reading. There is plenty of it, for the Dean was a most prolific writer; and the number of his squibs and songs and ballads and epistles and addresses and what not, is legion. There is not a spark of poetry in any of them, but there is considerable wit, and a very fair amount of humour. The misfortune is that the wit should be occasionally so nasty, and the humour too frequently so pronounced. Scarcely a 'poem' of this dignitary of the Church is unpolluted by a coarse expression or a *double entendre*. To read through the three volumes of the Aldine edition, for example, is to wade through a mass of verbiage which contains, after all, but a pennyworth of real wit and humour in comparison with the intolerable deal of rubbish. The fact is, the Dean was not, like Pope, an artist. His verses read, for the most part, as if they had been thrown off at a heat at all kinds of odd occasions. The epigrams are not badly finished off; and some of the political and personal effusions have a sort of rough and ready vigour. It is even possible that the longer pieces were written with more than usual care. Still, as a body, the Dean's verse is slipshod and heavy in the extreme. Apart from his epigrams, which are still effective, the only things of his worth reading are the more substantial compositions in which he satirised the society of his day. These are really useful to the historian, and really agreeable to the literary student. They show great acuteness of observation and power of sardonic satire, whilst they are written, on the whole, in an easy and agreeable style. The *Journal of a Modern Lady* is perhaps Swift's 'poetical'

chef d'œuvre. It recounts the history of a woman of fashion through a single day, and contains the following sprightly description of an eighteenth-century tea-party:

But let me now a while survey
Our madam o'er her evening tea,*
Surrounded with her noisy clans
Of prudes, coquettes, and harridans,
When, frighted at the clamorous crew,
Away the God of Silence flew,
And fair Discretion left the place,
And Modesty with blushing face;
Now enters overweening Pride,
And Scandal, ever gaping wide;
Hypocrisy with frown severe,
Scurrility with gibing air,
Rude Laughter, seeming like to burst,
And Malice, always judging worst;
And Vanity with pocket glass,
And Impudence with front of brass;
And studied Affectation came,
Each limb and feature out of frame;
While Ignorance, with brain of lead,
Flew hovering o'er each female head.
Why should I ask of thee, my Muse,
A hundred tongues, as poets use,
When, to give every dame her due,
A hundred thousand were too few?
Or how should I, alas! relate
The sum of all their senseless prate?
Now comes the general scandal charge;
What some invent, the rest enlarge;
And 'Madam, if it be a lie,
You have the tale as cheap as I;
I must conceal my author's name;
But now 'tis known to common fame.'
Say, foolish females, bold and blind,
Say, by what fatal turn of mind

* Pronounced 'tay.'

Are you on vices most severe
Wherein you have the greatest share?
Thus every fool herself deludes—
The prudes condemn the absent prudes;
Chloe, of every coxcomb jealous,
Admires* how girls can talk to fellows,
And full of indignation frets
That women should be such coquettes.
Iris, for scandal most notorious,
Cries, 'Lord, the world is so censorious!'
And Rufa, with her combs of lead,
Whispers that Sappho's hair is red;
Aura, whose tongue you hear a mile hence,
Talks half a day in praise of silence;
And Sylvia, full of inward guilt,
Calls Amoret an arrant jilt.

Similar in tone and quality is 'The Furniture of a Woman's Mind,' from which we take the opening paragraphs:

A set of phrases learn'd by rote;
A passion for a scarlet coat;
When at a play to laugh or cry,
Yet cannot tell the reason why;
Never to hold her tongue a minute,
While all she prates has nothing in it;
Whole hours can with a coxcomb sit,
And take his nonsense all for wit;
Her learning mounts to read a song,
But half the words pronouncing wrong;
Has every repartee in store
She spoke ten thousand times before;
Can ready compliments supply
On all occasions cut and dry;
Such hatred to a parson's gown,
The sight would put her in a swoon;
For conversation well endued,
She calls it witty to be rude;

* Wonders.

And, placing raillery in railing,
Will tell aloud your greatest failing;
Nor make a scruple to expose
Your bandy leg or crooked nose;
Can at her morning tea run o'er
The scandal of the day before;
Improving hourly in her skill
To cheat and wrangle at quadrille.
In choosing lace, a critic nice,
Knows to a groat the lowest price;
Can in her female clubs dispute,
What linen best the silk will suit,
What colours each complexion match,
And where with art to place a patch.

Read, too, the verses on 'The Death of Dr. Swift,' in which the Dean imagines, with much humour, what the town, and especially his friends, will say of him when he is dead. It is, perhaps, the most thoroughly amusing thing that Swift ever composed in verse. As a rule, his satire leaves in the mouth as unpleasant a taste as does that of Donne or Hall.

It is worth remarking how large a proportion of the satire of the time is occupied with the follies and frailties of fashionable ladies. Pope's works are full of such satire; we have seen how full are Swift's; and we have to remark the same in Gay's and Prior's. Gay is most noted—next to his *Beggars' Opera*—for his *Fables*, and these fables deal largely in philosophising on this suggestive subject. Gay, in fact, is never weary of offering his satirical advice to the aristocratic matrons and maidens of his time, and exhibits their characteristics under almost every conceivable form. His *Fables* are invariably too long to quote from, but we may venture to reproduce *in toto* his mock 'Elegy on a Lap-Dog,' the pseudo-serious tone of which is most enjoyable:

Shock's fate I mourn! poor Shock is now no more!
Ye Muses, mourn! ye chamber-maids, deplore!
Unhappy Shock! yet more unhappy fair,
Doom'd to survive thy joy and only care!

Thy wretched fingers now no more shall deck,
And tie the favourite riband round his neck;
No more thy hand shall smooth his glossy hair,
And comb the wavings of his pendant ear.
Yet cease thy flowing grief, forsaken maid,
All mortal pleasures in a moment fade:
Our surest hope is in an hour destroy'd,
And love, best gift of Heaven, not long enjoy'd.
Methinks I see her frantic with despair,
Her streaming eyes, wrung hands, and flowing hair;
Her Mechlin pinners, rent, the floor bestrow,
And her torn fan gives real signs of woe.
Hence, superstition! that tormenting guest,
That haunts with fancy'd fears the coward breast;
No dread events upon this fall attend,
Stream, eyes, no more, no more thy tresses rend.
Though certain omens oft forewarn a state,
And dying lions show the monarch's fate,
Why should such fears bid Cælia's sorrow rise?
For, when a lap-dog falls, no lover dies.
Cease, Cælia, cease! restrain thy flowing tears,
Some warmer passion will dispel thy cares.
In man you'll find a more substantial bliss,
More grateful toying, and a sweeter kiss.
He's dead. O, lay him gently in the ground!
And may his tomb be by this verse renown'd:
'Here Shock, the pride of all his kind, is laid,
Who fawn'd like man, but ne'er like man betray'd.'

Gay gracefully quizzes a notorious folly of his time in his lines 'To a Lady on her Passion for old China.' This, also, is too lengthy to reprint in full, but a few lines here and there may be acceptable:

China's the passion of her soul:
A cup, a plate, a dish, a bowl,
Can kindle wishes in her breast,
Inflame with joy, or break her rest.
Some gems collect; some medals prize,
And view the rust with lover's eyes;

Some court the stars at midnight hours;
Some doat on Nature's charms in flowers;
But every beauty I can trace
In Laura's mind, in Laura's face;
My stars are in this brighter sphere,
My lily and my rose is here. . . .
When I some antique jar behold,
Or white, or blue, or speck'd with gold;
Vessels so pure, and so refin'd,
Appear the types of woman-kind;
Are they not valued for their beauty,
Too fair, too fine, for household duty?
With flowers and gold and azure dy'd,
Of every house the grace and pride?
How white, how polish'd is their skin,
And valued most when only seen! . . .
Husbands, more covetous than sage,
Condemn this china-buying rage;
They count that woman's prudence little
Who sets her heart on things so brittle.
But are those wise men's inclinations
Fix'd on more strong, more sure foundations?
If all that's frail we must despise,
No human view or scheme is wise.
Are not ambition's hopes as weak?
They swell like bubbles, shine, and break.

Here the moralist threatens almost to obscure the satirist; and we turn, for contrast, to a performance in which Gay shows his humorous powers to somewhat more obvious advantage. In the 'Song of Similes,' for instance, we seem to be reading the production of a Thomas Hood of the eighteenth century. There is certainly much fancy in the lines:

My passion is as mustard strong;
I sit all sober sad;
Dumb as a piper all day long,
Or like a March-hare mad. . . .

Pert as a pear-monger I'd be,
  If Molly were but kind;
Cool as a cucumber, could see
  The rest of woman-kind.

Like a stuck-pig, I gaping stare,
  And eye her o'er and o'er;
Lean as a rake, with sighs and care,—
  Sleek as a mouse before.

Plump as a partridge was I known,
  And soft as silk my skin;
My cheeks as fat as butter grown,
  But as a goat, how thin.

I, melancholy as a cat,
  Am kept awake to weep;
But she, insensible of that,
  Sound as a top can sleep.

Hard is her heart as flint or stone,
  She laughs to see me pale;
And merry as a grig is grown,
  And brisk as bottled ale.

Ah me! as thick as hops or hail
  The fine men crowd about her;
But soon as dead as a door-nail
  Shall I be if without her. . . .

You'll know me truer when I die,
  And wish me better speed,—
Flat as a flounder when I lie,
  And as a herring dead.

From Gay we pass to Prior, whose witty and humorous work consists almost entirely of miscellaneous pieces of the stamp affected by Dean Swift. He wrote nothing so important as the *Opera* or the *Fables* that Gay wrote, but he surpassed the latter writer altogether in the vivacity and point of his short efforts. We all know how Thackeray has praised him. It must be confessed that he has considerably more ease and grace than any of his contem-

poraries, except, perhaps, Congreve. He occasionally writes an over-pointed story; but he is rarely so thoroughly objectionable as Swift is. He may be occasionally dull, but his style has generally an airiness to which neither Pope nor Gay could pretend. He is, on the whole, not unworthy of the title sometimes accorded to him of the English Horace, though he has not the sense of form or the felicity of epithet of his Latin prototype. His favourite subject was—like that of the men already mentioned—the peculiar peccadilloes of the female sex, to whom, indeed, he showed no mercy. He would write of a middle-aged belle:

How old may Phillis be, you ask,
Whose beauty thus all hearts engages?
To answer is no easy task:
For she has really two ages.

Stiff in brocade, and pinch'd in stays,
Her patches, paint, and jewels on;
All day let envy view her face,
And Phillis is but twenty-one.

Paint, patches, jewels laid aside,
At night astronomers agree
The evening has the day belied;
And Phillis is some forty-three.

Sometimes he would discharge his arrows against matrimony, as, for example:

On his death-bed poor Lubin lies:
His spouse is in despair;
With frequent sighs, and mutual cries,
They both express their care.

'A different cause,' says Parson Sly,
'The same effect may give:
Poor Lubin fears that he may die;
His wife, that he may live.'

At others he attacks a familiar type of bore, as in these lines 'On a Gluttonous Parasite:'

Frank carves very ill, yet will palm all the meats;
He eats more than six, and drinks more than he eats;
Four pipes after dinner he constantly smokes,
And seasons his whiffs with impertinent jokes.
Yet sighing he says we must certainly break;
And my cruel unkindness compels him to speak;
For of late I invite him but—four times a week!

Or these, 'On a Miserly Landlord:'

Thy nags (the leanest things alive),
So very hard thou lov'st to drive,
I heard thy anxious coachman say
It costs thee more in whips than hay.

Again, these 'On a Pedant:'

Lysander talks extremely well;
On any subject let him dwell,
His tropes and figures will content ye;
He should possess, to all degrees,
The art of talk: he practises
Full fourteen hours in four-and-twenty.

Lastly, take the famous epitaph which he wrote for himself:

Nobles and heralds, by your leave,
Here lies what once was Matthew Prior,
The son of Adam and of Eve;—
Can Bourbon or Nassau claim higher?

Of Prior's longer pieces we cannot stop to give examples, and we can only refer to the 'Female Phaeton,' the 'Secretary,' 'To a Child of Quality,' and other lyrics, as displaying his peculiar manner at its best. These lyrics have not, of course, quite the point of epigram, but they are emphatically witty in their essence, and stand out prominently from the general poetic work of the Augustan age.

Congreve, perhaps, comes nearest to Prior, of all his contemporaries, for ease and grace. Primarily a dramatist, he wrote a fair amount of verse, and always skilfully. His manner, critically examined, may be described as a combi-

nation of Pope's antithetic phrasing with Prior's airy turns of style. This is seen especially in the lyric we now reproduce:

Fair Amoret is gone astray,—
  Pursue, and seek her, every lover;
I'll tell the signs by which you may
  The wandering shepherdess discover.

Coquet and coy at once her air,
  Both studied, though both seem neglected;
Careless she is with artful care,
  Affecting to seem unaffected.

With skill her eyes dart every glance,
  Yet change so soon you'd ne'er suspect them;
For she'd persuade they wound by chance,
  Though certain aim and art direct them.

She likes herself, yet others hates
  For that which in herself she prizes;
And, while she laughs at them, forgets
  She is the thing that she despises.

The expression here of 'Affecting to seem unaffected' is extremely characteristic of the writer's mode, just as the whole poem is a masterly description of a very common type of woman of his time. Here, too, is a very characteristic little effort:

Pious Selinda goes to prayers
  If I but ask her favour;
And yet the silly fool's in tears
  If she believes I'll leave her.

Would I were free from this restraint,
  Or else had hopes to win her:
Would she could make of me a saint,
  Or I of her a sinner!

This is the 'fine gentleman' all over. Congreve, it is well known, piqued himself far more upon his position as a man of fashion than upon his status as a man of letters, and the weakness is observable in the *soupçon* of coxcombry more or less noticeable in his occasional verse.

We shall give but one specimen of his satiric work—the epigram on a certain Lesbia:

When Lesbia first I saw, so heavenly fair,
With eyes so bright and with that awful air,
I thought my heart, which durst so high aspire,
Was bold as his who snatch'd celestial fire.

But soon as e'er the beauteous idiot spoke,
Forth from her coral lips such folly broke,
Like balm the trickling nonsense heal'd my wound,
And what her eyes enthrall'd her tongue unbound.

It is, perhaps, cruel to disassociate Pope from the lady whom he most loved and hated during life—the Lady Mary Wortley Montagu,* whom he praised or satirised according as she smiled or frowned upon him. So far as the frowning goes, it is well known that the lady was a match even for the author of *The Dunciad*, her powers of satire being unmistakable, as shown, for example, in her biting verses on the subject of Sir Robert Walpole. How clever, too, was her rapid summary of Lord Lyttelton's 'Advice to a Lady:'

Be plain in dress, and sober in your diet;
In short, my deary, kiss me, and be quiet!

If the poet had a rasping tongue, the lady had a mocking one, and has left behind her many testimonies to the critical eye with which she gazed on her contemporaries. Man delighted her not, nor woman either. In her verses called 'The Lover,' she tells us what sort of man she would like to have in that capacity, and the description is a sad satire by implication upon the young men of the period. Then, so as to be thoroughly impartial, she turns to the young fashionable lady of the time, and gently quizzes her in lines which are all so characteristic that we have not the heart to omit a single one of them. Let Lady Mary be heard speaking through the mouth of a youthful married dame, whom bad fortune has compelled to ruralise. Thus does she make her melancholy moan:

* Born 1690, died 1762.

By the side of a half-rotten wood
  Melantha sat silently down,
Convinc'd that her scheme was not good,
  And vex'd to be absent from town.
Whilst pitied by no living soul,
  To herself she was forc'd to reply,
And the sparrow, as grave as an owl,
  Sat list'ning and pecking hard by.

'Alas! silly maid that I was;'
  Thus sadly complaining, she cry'd;
'When first I forsook that dear place,
  'T had been better by far that I had dy'd!
How gayly I pass'd the long days,
  In a round of continued delights!
Park, visits, assemblies, and plays,
  And a dance to enliven the nights.

'How simple was I to believe
  Delusive poetical dreams!
Or the flattering landscapes they give,
  Of meadows, and murmuring streams.
Bleak mountains, and cold starving rocks,
  Are the wretched result of my pains;
The swains greater brutes than their flocks,
  And the nymphs as polite as the swains.

'What tho' I have got my dear Phil;
  I see him all night and all day;
I find I must not have my will,
  And I've cursedly sworn to obey!
Fond damsel, thy power is lost;
  As now I experience too late;
Whatever a lover may boast,
  A husband is what one may hate!

'And thou, my old woman, so dear,
  May all that is left of relief,
Whatever I suffer, forbear—
  Forbear to dissuade me from grief;

'Tis in vain, as you say, to repine
At ills which can not be redress'd;
But in sorrows so poignant as mine,
To be patient, alas! is a jest.

'If farther to soothe my distress,
Your tender compassion is led,
Come hither and help to undress,
And decently put me to bed.
The last humble solace I wait,
Wou'd Heav'n but indulge me the boon,
May some dream, less unkind than my fate,
In a vision transport me to town.

'Clarissa, meantime, weds a beau,
Who decks her in golden array;
She's the finest at ev'ry fine show,
And flaunts it at park and at play.
Whilst I am here left in the lurch,
Forgot and excluded from view;
Unless when some bumpkin at church
Stares wistfully over the pew.'

Lord Lyttelton belongs, perhaps, rather to the generation of Goldsmith than to that of Pope. We may, however, place him side by side with the clever woman who satirised him. He had himself considerable abilities—did he not write the *Dialogues of the Dead* and *Letters from a Persian?*—and among them was a capacity for humour by no means to be despised, with a turn for style which places him among the neatest writers of his time.* He had, like more than one statesman we may have to notice, the true tone and temper of familiar verse, as may be seen in these lines upon a lady who excused herself from doing such and such a thing because 'she had no time:'

On Thames's bank, a gentle youth
For Lucy sighed with matchless truth,
Even when he sighed in rhyme;

* He was born in 1709, and died in 1773. His *Dialogues* appeared in 1760; his *Letters* in 1735.

The lovely maid his flame returned,
And would with equal warmth have burned,
  But that she had not time.

Oft he repaired with eager feet
In secret shades this fair to meet
  Beneath the accustomed lime;
She would have fondly met him there,
And healed with love each tender care,
  But that she had not time.

'It was not thus, inconstant maid,
You acted once' (the shepherd said),
  'When love was in its prime.'
She grieved to hear him thus complain,
And would have writ to ease his pain,
  But that she had not time.

'How can you act so cold a part?
No crime of mine has changed your heart,
  If love be not a crime.
We soon must part for months, for years'—
She would have answered with her tears,
  But that she had not time.

We have already remarked upon the fondness shown by writers of this time for sarcastic references to the peculiarities of women of fashion. Here is a sort of pendant portrait to that just taken from the gallery of Lady Mary. It is by Thomas Tickell, and is not quite so overtly satirical as the piece with which we have coupled it. It will be noticed that four of the lines are identical with those which Sir Benjamin Backbite quotes as his own composition in the *School for Scandal:*

Then, behind, all my hair is done up in a plat,
And so, like a cornet's, tuck'd under my hat;
Then I mount on my palfrey as gay as a lark,
And, follow'd by John, take the dust in High Park.
In the way I am met by some smart macaroni,
Who rides by my side on a little bay pony.

No sturdy Hibernian, with shoulders so wide,
But as taper and slim as the ponies they ride;
Their legs are as slim, and their shoulders no wider,
Dear sweet little creatures, both pony and rider!

But sometimes, when hotter, I order my chaise,
And manage, myself, my two little grays:
There never were seen two such sweet little ponies,
Other horses are clowns, and these macaronies;
And to give them this title I'm sure isn't wrong,
Their legs are so slim, and their tails are so long.

In Kensington Gardens to stroll up and down,
You know was the fashion before you left town.
The thing's well enough, when allowance is made
For the size of the trees and the depth of the shade;
But the spread of their leaves such a shelter affords
To those noisy impertinent creatures call'd birds,
Whose ridiculous chirruping ruins the scene,
Brings the country before me, and gives me the spleen.

We have yet another society satirist to notice in the person of the Rev. James Bramston,* on whom Leigh Hunt has already conferred a quasi-immortality by quoting, from his *Man of Taste*, the line—

Without black-velvet breeches, what is man?

Unfortunately the poem, though it has a large measure of persiflage, and many felicitous expressions, is not all of it so good as this. There are such couplets as—

Rhyme bends and beautifies the poet's bays,
As London ladies owe their shape to stays.

But that is about all. The *Art of Politics*, by the same writer, is livelier and more vigorous. For example:

Parliamenteering is a sort of itch,
That will too oft unwary knights bewitch.
Two good estates Sir Harry Clodpole spent;
Sate thrice, but spoke not once, in Parliament.

* Died 1744. His *Man of Taste* and *Art of Politics* are in Dodsley's *Collection*.

Two good estates are gone—who'll take his word?
Oh, should his uncle die, he'll spend a third;
He'd buy a house, his happiness to crown,
Within a mile of some good borough-town.
Tag-rag and bobtail to Sir Harry's run,
Men that have votes, and women that have none;
Sons, daughters, grandsons, with his honour dine;
He keeps a public-house without a sign.
Cobblers and smiths extol th' evening choice,
And drunken tailors boast their right of voice.
Dearly the free-born neighbourhood is bought;
They never leave him while he's worth a groat.

Bramston also wrote an imitation of Philips's *Splendid Shilling*, called the *Crooked Sixpence*. His *Art of Politics* and *Man of Taste* are themselves imitations, in their way, of the satires of Pope, though at a very considerable distance. Bramston is, however, hardly so well known, even by name, as the merits of his works—and they are undeniable—deserve that he should be.

Matthew Green* is chiefly known in literature as the author of *The Spleen*—a 'poem' on one of those particularly unpoetic subjects which writers of his century were fond of choosing. It is a very dreary production, and we should not be disposed to describe its author as being naturally a humourist. That he had, however, a certain amount of shrewdness and of Hudibrastic satire may be gathered from the lines he wrote on the respective 'Histories' of Mr. Laurence Eachard and Bishop Gilbert Burnet:

Gil's history appears to me
Political anatomy;
A case of skeletons well done,
And malefactors every one.
His sharp and strong incision-pen
Historically cuts up men,
And does with lucid skill impart
These inward ails of head and heart.

* Born 1696, died 1737.

Laurence proceeds another way,
And well-dressed figures does display:
His characters are all in flesh,
Their hands are fair, their faces fresh;
And from his sweetening heart derive
A better scent than when alive.
He wax-work made to please the sons
Whose fathers were Gil's skeletons.

Only one Scotchman can be said to be represented in the wit and humour of this period, and that is Allan Ramsay,* who belongs, indeed, partly to the time of Pope, and partly to the time of Goldsmith. His chief work is *The Gentle Shepherd*, which deserves remembrance more on account of its accuracy as a picture of Scotch rustic life than of its humour, which is not very great at its best, and which is never very intelligible to Englishmen. We doubt if it is very highly appreciated by the writer's countrymen, who prefer something more incisive than the homely talk of country people, and for whom not even Bauldry has a very great attraction. We refrain from quoting from the poem, because its most humorous passages are exactly those which would be least comprehensible by the general reader. We merely refer to Ramsay's *Fables* for the same reason. It must, in fact, be confessed, that for pure wit and humour we must go to Ramsay's English work, and especially to his epigrams, some of which are excellent. Take, for instance, this on 'Whig and Tory:'

Whig and Tory scratch and bite,
Just as hungry dogs we see;
Toss a bone 'twixt two, they fight;
Throw a couple, they agree.

Take, again, this, addressed to a lady to whom, at the same time, he returned a book called *The Intelligencer:*

I have kept your 'Intelligence,' madam, so long,
That I hardly dare hope you will pardon the wrong;

* Ramsay was born in 1686, and died in 1758. *The Gentle Shepherd* appeared in 1725.

Had you been but a man, no excuse I had writ,
For we're seldom severe to the faults we commit.
But 'Intelligence' kept the kind ladies most gall,
Who no sooner receive it than part with it all!

Then—in another vein and mood—to a lady who had given him an orange:

Now, Priam's son, thou mayst be mute,
For I can blithely boast with thee;
Thou to the fairest gave the fruit,
The fairest gave the fruit to me.

This, for the author of the chief Scottish eclogue in the language, is wonderfully polished, and exhibits the wide extent of Ramsay's talent.

CHAPTER VI.

GOLDSMITH AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES.

Oliver Goldsmith—'Retaliation'—'The Gift'—Epigrams—Edward Young—'The Love of Fame'—Epigrams—Samuel Johnson—'Vanity of Human Wishes'—Epigrams—Charles Churchill—'The Prophecy of Famine'—'The Rosciad'—Henry Fielding—'Tom Thumb'—Lines to Sir Robert Walpole—Henry Carey—'Chrononhotonthologus'—Lines—Thomas Gray—'Ode on the Death of a Favourite Cat'—Epigram—Sir Charles Hanbury Williams—Lines on Lord Bute—Lines on General Churchill—Horace Walpole—Epigram—Lord Chesterfield—Epigram—Lines on the Duchess of Richmond—David Garrick—Epigrams—John Byrom—Epigrams—Robert Fergusson—Epigrams—Hawkins Browne—'The Pipe of Tobacco'—Lloyd and Colman—'Ode to Obscurity'—'The Actor'—Lisle—'Eurydice.'

CHAPTER VI.

GOLDSMITH AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES.

RICH as were the times of Dryden and of Pope in names preëminent in the world of wit and humour, they can hardly be said to surpass in this respect the time of Goldsmith and his fellows. The former had a few great names and little more; the latter had several great names, together with names scarcely inferior in celebrity. Thus satire owned as votaries such men as Young and Churchill and Johnson. Society verse occupied the leisure of such men as Hanbury Williams and Walpole and Chesterfield; familiar verse was produced by such men as Gray and Fielding and Carey; epigrams were fired off by such men as Garrick and Byrom and Fergusson; parody received the attention of such men as Browne and Lloyd and Colman. As we have said, the stream increases in width and in volume as it approaches its end. Wit and humour become more generally noticeable, and grow rather than decrease in inherent value and attractiveness.

Where, for example, could you find a more charming wit and humourist—for he was both—than Goldsmith?* We confess that for our part we know no writer more thoroughly enjoyable—none to whom one can more readily turn again and again without ever wearying of his words. Perhaps this is why it is that Goldsmith is so popular. He wrote very little verse, after all; yet what he did write was so first rate of its kind—so genuinely good—that it has stuck in the memory of the public. His words are in every sense of the term familiar words. We suspect there are few poems of the same length as his 'Retaliation,' of which so many lines have passed into the immortality of current every-day quotation. There is scarcely a figure in that

* Born 1728, died 1774.

incomparable portrait-gallery—(which was for Goldsmith's time what the various *Sessions* and *Feasts* of the poets were and have been for former and later generations)—which is not also in the mental collection of every educated reader. Who does not remember his own description of himself as

Magnanimous Goldsmith, a gooseberry fool?

Who does not remember the description of Edmund Burke,

Who, born for the universe, narrowed his mind,
And to party gave up what was meant for mankind;
Who, too deep for his hearers, still went on repining,
And thought of convincing, while they thought of dining?

Who does not remember the description of Cumberland* as

The Terence of England, the mender of hearts?

Who does not remember, above all, the masterly analysis of Garrick—an analysis too long to be quoted in its entirety, but which maintains the fame of the actor, and will continue to do so long after his histrionic triumphs are forgotten? Everybody knows how 'Retaliation,' arose; how Garrick and others—Garrick especially—set to work to satirise Goldsmith in epigram—Garrick in a couple of lines which are as familiar as anything in Goldsmith—and how Goldsmith, in 'Retaliation,' successfully turned the tables on his foes. Certainly, if Garrick was the chief means of arousing Goldsmith's satiric faculty in this connection, he is at once to be thanked for the service, and pitied for the castigation which it brought upon him.

For the rest, it is to be noted how numerous were the forms in which Goldsmith's witty and humorous powers showed themselves. It is as true of this part of his work as of the other parts, that he touched nothing which he did not adorn. Let him try parody, and he produces the excellent imitation 'in the matter of Dr. Swift.' Let him try mock-heroic description of a type already familiar in the language, and he produces the famous picture of 'An Author's Bedchamber.' Let him try an effort in the way

* Author of *The West Indian* and other plays.

of what may be called the humour of the unexpected, and he produces the 'elegy' on 'Mrs. Blaize,' which may not have been original in idea, but is certainly admirably worked out, and one of the best of its class in English. Somewhat in the same style is the little *morceau* called 'The Gift,' which may almost be called an epigram 'long drawn out:'

Say, cruel Iris, pretty rake,
  Dear mercenary beauty,
What annual offering shall I make
  Expressive of my duty?

My heart, a victim to thine eyes,
  Should I at once deliver,
Say, would the angry fair one prize
  The gift, who slights the giver?

A bill, a jewel, watch, or toy,
  My rivals give—and let 'em;
If gems or gold impart a joy,
  I'll give them—when I get 'em.

I'll give—but not the full-blown rose,
  Or rose-bud more in fashion;
Such short-lived offerings but disclose
  A transitory passion.

I'll give thee something yet unpaid,
  Not less sincere than civil;
I'll give thee—ah! too charming maid,
  I'll give thee—to the devil.

Here, it seems to us, we have a grace of form and a lightness of touch quite equal to anything of the sort yet written. In the 'Elegy on the Death of a Mad Dog' we have something entirely *sui generis*—a bit of humour for which Goldsmith was assuredly indebted to no one, and in which he has had but few, if any, imitators. Other writers might have told us that

The dog, to gain some private ends,
  Went mad and bit the man;

but it was left for Goldsmith to tell us how

> The man recovered of the bite—
> The dog it was that died.

In epigram pure and simple, Goldsmith, as it happened, did but little. The following can hardly be regarded as much more than an old story versified:

> John Trott was desir'd by two witty peers
> To tell them the reason why asses had ears?
> 'An't please you,' quoth John, 'I'm not given to letters,
> Nor dare I pretend to know more than my betters;
> Howe'er, from this time I shall ne'er see your graces,
> As I hope to be sav'd, without thinking of asses!'

Still, as we have said, Goldsmith managed to cram into a small space an immense variety of style and matter—much more, in truth, than did any of his contemporaries. Young, Johnson, and Churchill were satirists, and little more, though Young wrote a few epigrams, and Johnson was guilty of some *jeux d'esprit*. Young, with his *Night Thoughts* and his *Universal Passion*, was much read and much liked in his day; but who reads (or likes) him now?* He is quoted (unconsciously sometimes) by every one who says: 'Be wise to-day, 'tis madness to defer;' or, 'Procrastination is the thief of time.' But that is about the extent of his present vogue. His satire is certainly not a favourite with the rising generation, who would be bored to extinction by the prosy moralisings which Young introduces into his most brilliantly epigrammatic passages. Young was too gloomy a writer to last long. Yet what unquestionable brightness he has every now and then! Read this:

> Belus with solid glory will be crowned;
> He buys no phantom, no vain empty sound,
> But builds himself a name, and to be great
> Sinks in a quarry an immense estate:

* Edward Young, born 1684, died 1765. The *Universal Passion* appeared in 1725-8; the *Night Thoughts* in 1742.

In cost and grandeur Chandos he'll outdo,
And Burlington, thy taste is not so true.
The pile is finished, every toil is past,
And full perfection is arrived at last;
When lo! my lord to some small corner runs,
And leaves state-rooms to strangers and to duns.
The man who builds, and wants wherewith to pay,
Provides a home from which to run away.
In Britain, what is many a lordly seat
But a discharge in full for an estate?

The last four lines, it will be noticed, are especially successful. This, too, about the crowd of Grub-street authors has much vigour:

Shall we not censure all the motley train,
Whether with ale irriguous or champagne?
Whether they tread the vale of prose, or climb
And whet their appetites on cliffs of rhyme;
The college sloven or embroidered spark,
The purple prelate or the parish clerk,
The quiet quidnunc or demanding prig,
The plaintiff Tory or defendant Whig;
Rich, poor, male, female, young, old, gay, or sad,
Whether extremely or quite mad;
Profoundly dull or shallowly polite,
Men that read well or men that only write.

As for Young's few epigrams,—he wrote the celebrated lines on Voltaire's ridicule of Milton's allegory of Sin and Death:

You are so witty, profligate, and thin,
At once we think thee Milton, Death, and Sin.

It is only fair, too, to remind the reader of what we have already stated,—that Young is said by Spence* to be the author of the exquisite compliment to Chesterfield already quoted.†

Johnson‡ was another of the heavy satirists. With him

* In his *Anecdotes*. † See p. 110 ante.

‡ Born 1709, died 1784. *London* was printed in 1738, and *Human Wishes* in 1749.

satire meant denunciation, and denunciation of the high moral, not the bitingly sarcastic or the lambently quizzical, character. His *Vanity of Human Wishes* has some lofty and sonorous passages, notably those on Wolsey and on Charles of Sweden; as well as some rememberable lines, such as—

> Superfluous lags the veteran on the stage,

and—

> From Marlborough's eyes the streams of dotage flow,
> And Swift expires a driveller and a show.

Still, as a whole, it is most wofully turgid, and the opening lines,

> Let observation with extensive view,
> Survey mankind from China to Peru,

are so bombastically tautological as to be almost bathos. Of wit and humour there is nothing, either in this poem or in its companion, *London;* both of them Juvenalian echoes, and, as such, indeed, worthy of all the admiration ever extended to them.

If we want to see Johnson as a wit and a humourist, we must shut up his poems and go to the pages of his Life. Here we sometimes find his native drollery in play, as when he parodies, with—

> Who drives fat oxen should himself be fat;

when he mimics the old ballad style, with—

> As with my hat upon my head
> I walk'd along the Strand,
> I there did meet another man
> With his hat in his hand;

and when, again, he burlesques the prevailing style of epigram, in—

> If a man who turnips cries
> Cry not when his father dies,
> 'Tis a proof that he would rather
> Have a turnip than a father.

Really, for the sake of that, one is inclined to forgive the Doctor for ever having written such a work as the *Vanity of Human Wishes*.

The great true satirist of this period was, unquestionably, Churchill.* Unfortunately, of his two best works, one is a violent attack upon a particular nation, and an attack inspired more by prejudice than by acumen; while the other is an equally violent onslaught upon the actors of his day, necessarily personal in its character, and now to a great extent neglected, owing to the ephemeral nature of the subject. The first of these is the *Prophecy of Famine;* the second is the much more famous *Rosciad*. Neither is much read in these latter days; yet both are emphatically in the finest vein of satire—in the vein in which Dryden worked in his supremest moments. Take, as a specimen, the well-known and always acceptable lines which begin the *Prophecy:*

Two boys, whose birth beyond all question springs
From great and glorious, though forgotten, kings;
Shepherds of Scottish lineage, born and bred
On the same bleak and barren mountain's head;
By niggard nature doomed on the same rocks
To spin out life and starve themselves and flocks—
Fresh as the morning, which enrobed in mist
The mountain's top with usual dulness kissed,
Jockey and Sawney to their labours rose,
Soon clad, I ween, where nature needs no clothes;
Where from their youth inured to winter skies,
Dress and her vain refinements they despise.
Jockey, whose manly high cheek-bones to crown
With freckles spotted flamed the golden down,
With meikle art could on the bagpipes play,
Even from the rising to the setting day.
Sawney as long without remorse could bawl
Home's madrigals, and ditties from Fingal:

* Charles Churchill, born 1731, died 1764. The *Rosciad* was published in 1761, and the *Prophecy* in 1763.

Oft at his strains, all natural though rude,
The Highland lass forgot her want of food;
And whilst she scratched her lover into rest,
Sunk pleased, though hungry, on her Sawney's breast.
Far as the eye could reach no tree was seen,
Earth clad in russet scorned the lively green:
The plague of locusts they secure defy,
For in three hours a grasshopper must die.
No living thing, whate'er its food, feasts there
But the chameleon, who can feast on air;
No birds, except as birds of passage, flew,
No bee was known to hum, no dove to coo,
No streams, as amber smooth, as amber clear,
Were seen to glide or heard to warble here.
Rebellion's spring, which through the country ran,
Furnished with bitter draughts the steady clan:
No flowers embalmed the air but one white rose,
Which on the tenth of June* by instinct blows;
By instinct blows at morn, and when the shades
Of drizzly eve prevail, by instinct fades.

Nothing could be finer in its way than the whole conception and execution of this passage; while separate lines are absolutely masterly in turn, notably those about the Highland girl, false and objectionable as they are, and those about the 'one white rose,' with the consummate reference of its birth and death to 'instinct.' There is much more of the same sort of thing in this clever poem, into which Churchill would seem to have distilled all the unreasoning hatred to North Britons which at that time animated the breasts of so many Englishmen, not even excepting Dr. Samuel Johnson. The *Rosciad* has not such permanent interest for the public as the *Prophecy* has; yet certain parts of it are still recollected, and will probably be remembered for some time to come,—especially those connected with actors whose names at any rate must invariably demand respect. The sketch of Garrick is particularly

* The birthday of the old Pretender, by which day the gardeners in Jacobite families were always anxious to have the white rose—the Jacobite emblem—in full bloom.

pointed. The reference to Davies, the biographer of Garrick, but a mediocre actor—

Odds, my life!
That Davies hath a very pretty wife—

must have been crushing, particularly as it was followed by the intimation (now so hackneyed) that—

He mouths a sentence as curs mouth a bone.

Authors and artists were also celebrated in the poem. Smollett, for example, was pilloried with even more than usual bitterness, the rambling character of his fictions being thus hit off:

Others for plots and underplots may call:
There's the right method,—have no plot at all!

Henry Fielding is described in the *Rosciad* as 'him who wrote the life of Tommy Thumb.'* The distinction is not, perhaps, the one above all others which that highly respectable police-magistrate would have chosen; still, it is not dishonourable, for there are few more amusing things than the extravaganza of *Tom Thumb* throughout the length and breadth of literature. It parodies the romantic dramas of the time as Buckingham's *Rehearsal* parodied those of Dryden and his contemporaries, and it does so very funnily. At one point Tom Thumb says:

I ask not kingdoms—I can conquer these;
I ask not money—money I've enough.
For what I've done, and what I mean to do,
For giants slain, and giants yet unborn,
Which I will slay,—if this be called a debt,
Take my receipt in full:—I ask but this,
To sun myself in Huncamunca's eyes.

Upon which the king remarks (aside):

Prodigious bold request!

It is in *Tom Thumb* that there occurs the well-known simile of the dogs, which Leigh Hunt long ago commended

* Henry Fielding, born 1707, died 1754.

for 'the solemnity of its triviality and the stately monosyllabic stamp of its music:'

> So when two dogs are fighting in the streets,
> When a third dog one of the two dogs meets,
> With angry tooth he bites him to the bone,
> And this dog smarts for what that dog has done.

We don't know, in fact, that there is anything in dramatic verse to compare for absolute comicality with Fielding's *Tom Thumb* except Carey's *Chrononhotonthologus**—a burlesque drama, which not to have read argues that a man has a delightful hour to look forward to. The affected pomposity of the dialogue throughout is marvellously ludicrous—much more so than anything in the much-vaunted and over-praised *Bombastes Furioso.* You can guess the sort of way in which the people talk when this is the manner in which they propose to call a coach:

> Let a coach be called,
> And let the man who called it be the caller,
> And in his calling let him nothing call
> But coach, coach, coach! O for a coach, ye gods!

The name of one of the characters in the piece occupies a blank-verse line, as:

> Aldiborontiphoscophornio,
> Where left you Chrononhotonthologus?

Rigdum Funnidos is the milder name of another character.

It is not, however, as parodists pure and simple that Fielding and Carey deserve special notice; it is rather as producers of what, in order to distinguish it from society verse, we would propose to call familiar verse—verse which hits the medium between absolutely comic verse and absolutely serious verse. Of that kind of verse we can imagine few better examples than is afforded by Fielding's mock addresses to Sir Robert Walpole. One runs as follows:

> Great sir, as on each *levée* day
> I still attend you, still you say,

* Produced in 1734.

I'm busy now, to-morrow come;
To-morrow, sir, you're not at home;
So says your porter, and dare I
Give such a man as him the lie?

In imitation, sir, of you,
I keep a mighty *levée* too:
Where my attendants, to their sorrow,
Are bid to come again to-morrow.
To-morrow they return, no doubt,
But then, like you, sir, I'm gone out.

So says my maid; but they, less civil,
Give maid and master to the devil;
And then with menaces depart,
Which could you hear would pierce your heart.
Good sir, do make my *levée* fly me,
Or lend your porter to deny me.

The humour here is most delightful. It is an offspring of the time when Fielding was not a respectable police-magistrate, but a needy author, very desirous of substantial patronage. The following is also the offspring of that period:

While at the helm of state you ride,
Our nation's envy, and its pride;
While foreign Courts with wonder gaze,
And curse those counsels that they praise;
Would you not wonder, sir, to view
Your bard a greater man than you?
Which that he is, you cannot doubt,
When you have read the sequel out. . . .

The family that dines the latest
Is in our street esteemed the greatest;
But latest hours must surely fall
'Fore him who never dines at all.
Your taste in architect, you know,
Hath been admired by friend and foe;
But can your earthly domes compare
With all my castles—in the air?

We're often taught it doth behove us
To think those greater who're above us:
Another instance of my glory,
Who live above you, twice two storey;
And from my garret can look down
On the whole street of Arlington.

Greatness by poets still is painted
With many followers acquainted:
This, too, doth in my favour speak;
Your *levée* is but twice a week;
From mine I can exclude but one day,
My door is quiet on a Sunday.
Nor in the manner of attendance
Doth your great bard claim less ascendance;—
Familiar you to admiration
May be approached by all the nation;
While I, like Mogul in Indo,
Am never seen but at my window.
If with my greatness you're offended,
The fault is easily amended;
For I'll come down, with wondrous ease,
Into whatever *place* you please.
I'm not ambitious: little matters
Will serve us great but humble creatures.

Suppose a secretary o' this isle,
Just to be doing with a while;
Admiral, general, judge, or bishop:
Or I can foreign treaties dish up.
If the good genius of the nation
Should call me to negotiation,
Tuscan and French are in my head,
Latin I write and Greek—I read.
If you should ask, what pleases best?
To get the most and do the least;
What fittest for? you know, I'm sure,
I'm fittest for—a sinecure.

Admirable verse of this sort will probably be of the nature of a revelation to those who only conceive of Fielding as the

greatest of English novelists, and forget that he was at the same time one of the greatest of English humourists.

Henry Carey is probably known to nine out of ten people as the author of 'Sally in our Alley.'* The tenth person is, we hope, aware that we owe both the music and the words of our National Anthem to this accomplished writer, who was as accomplished a musician as he was an amusing playwright, and as graceful a song-writer as he was an accomplished musician. How gracefully he could pen a song may be seen from the one we copy;—there are many like it:

With an honest old friend and a merry old song,
And a flask of old port, let me sit the night long,
And laugh at the malice of those who repine
That they must drink porter whilst I can drink wine.

I envy no mortal, though ever so great,
Nor scorn I a wretch for his lowly estate;
But what I abhor and esteem as a curse
Is poorness of spirit, not poorness of purse.

Then dare to be generous, dauntless, and gay,
Let us merrily pass life's remainder away,
Upheld by our friends, we our foes may despise,
For the more we are envied the higher we rise.

We have described Gray as a writer of familiar verse.† It is chiefly in that character that he must figure here, where we have nothing to do with him as a master of poetical mosaic. What we have to remember is that he was the author of such pieces as the ode 'On the Death of a Favourite Cat'—a *morceau* perfect of its kind. It would be sacrilege to make an extract from it; and to read it through again—familiar as it is to most people—is, after all, to make acquaintance anew with a masterpiece of combined humour and artistic skill:

'Twas on a lofty vase's side,
Where China's gayest art had dyed
The azure flowers that blow:

* Born 1663, died 1743. † Thomas Gray, born 1716, died 1771.

Demurest of the tabby kind
The pensive Selima, reclined,
  Gazed on the lake below.

Her conscious tail her joy declared,
The fair round face, the snowy beard,
  The velvet of her paws,
Her coat, that with the tortoise vies,
Her ears of jet and emerald eyes,
  She saw, and purr'd applause.

Still had she gazed; but 'midst the tide
Two angel forms were seen to glide,
  The genii of the stream;
Their scaly armour's Tyrian hue
Through richest purple to the view
  Betrayed a golden gleam.

The hapless nymph with wonder saw:
A whisker first, and then a claw,
  With many an ardent wish,
She stretched, in vain, to reach the prize—
What female heart can gold despise?
  What cat's averse to fish?

Presumptuous maid! with look intent,
Again she stretch'd, again she bent,
  Nor knew the gulf between;
Malignant Fate sat by and smiled,
The slipp'ry verge her feet beguiled,—
  She tumbled headlong in.

Eight times emerging from the flood,
She mew'd to ev'ry wat'ry god
  Some speedy aid to send.
No Dolphin came, no Nereid stirr'd,
Nor cruel Tom nor Susan heard—
  A fav'rite has no friend.

From hence, ye beauties, undeceived,
Know one false step is ne'er retrieved,
  And be with caution bold.

Not all that tempts your wand'ring eyes
And heedless hearts is lawful prize,
Nor all that glisters gold.

Perhaps this should have given way to the 'Long Story'—another *chef-d'œuvre* in the way of delicate persiflage—but the story is literally long. Let us rather take our leave of Gray—for it is unnecessary to linger among so many old and cherished friends—with an epigram directed against a certain disreputable minister who sought admission to the Church of England,—an epigram which shows that Gray had a reserve-fund of tremendous satire — a fund upon which, on the whole, one is thankful that he did not draw more frequently:

Thus Tophet look'd; so grinn'd the brawling fiend,
Whilst frighted prelates bow'd and call'd him friend.
Our mother church, with half-averted sight,
Blush'd as she bless'd her grisly proselyte.
Hosannas rung through Hell's tremendous borders,
And Satan's self had thoughts of taking orders.

The true society-verse-writing of the time was done, for the most part, by Lord Chesterfield, Horace Walpole, and Sir Charles Hanbury Williams. The latter* was even more of a political than a social satirist, throwing into his squibs a grace of style as well as a point of expression which remind one of the similar effusions of Mackworth Praed. Of all his work in this direction, the lines he addressed to Pulteney, then Earl of Bath, are perhaps the most thoroughly admirable as satire, and the most likely to maintain their place in literature. They are so very vitriolic that, if less elegantly written, they would be almost offensive, even at this interval of time. They run:

What statesman, what hero, what king,
Whose name through the island is spread,
Will you choose, O, my Clio, to sing,
Of all the great living or dead?

* Born 1709, died 1759.

Go, my Muse, from this place to Japan,
In search of a topic for rhyme;
The great Earl of Bath is the man
Who deserves to employ your whole time.

But, howe'er, as the subject is nice,
And perhaps you're unfurnished with matter,
May it please you to take my advice,
That you mayn't be suspected to flatter.

When you touch on his lordship's high birth,
Speak Latin as if you were tipsy;
Say we all are sons of the earth,
Et genus non fecimus ipsi.

Proclaim him as rich as a Jew,
Yet attempt not to reckon his bounties;
You may say he is married—that's true—
Yet speak not a word of his countess.

Leave a blank here and there in each page,
To enrol the fair deeds of his youth!
When you mention the acts of his age,
Leave a blank for his—honour and truth.

Say he made a great monarch change hands;
He spake, and the Minister fell;
Say he made a great statesman of Sandys—*
O that he had taught him to spell!

Then enlarge on his cunning and wit,
Say how he harangued at the Fountain;
Say how the old patriots were bit,
And a mouse was produced by a mountain.

Then say how he mark'd the new year
By increasing our taxes and stocks;
Then say how he changed to a peer,
Fit companion for Edgcumbe and Fox.

Equally polished and pointed, though in a different style, is his sketch of the character of General Churchill, the merit

* Pronounced 'Sands.'

of which lies, however, largely in its historic, though not generous, correctness:

> None led through youth a gayer life than he,
> Cheerful in converse, smart in repartee.
> And with old age its vices come along,
> And in narration he's extremely long;
> Exact in circumstance, and nice in dates,
> On every subject he his tale relates.
> If you name one of Marlbro's ten campaigns,
> He tells you its whole history for your pains,
> And Blenheim's field becomes, by his reciting,
> As long in telling as he was in fighting;
> His old desire to please is well expressed,
> His hat's well cocked, his periwig's well dressed;
> He rolls his stockings still, white gloves he wears,
> And in the boxes with the beaux appears;
> His eyes through wrinkled corners cast their rays,
> Still he bows graceful, still soft things he says;
> And, still remembering that he once was young,
> He strains his crippled knees and struts along.
> The room he entered smiling, which bespoke
> Some worn-out compliment or threadbare joke,
> For, not perceiving loss of parts, he yet
> Grasps at the shade of his departed wit.

Many of Williams's effusions are more lively and entertaining than either of these specimens. Most people have heard of the daring *jeu d'esprit* in which he said of the illustrious Misses Gunning that

> Nature, indeed, denied them sense,
> But gives them legs and impudence,
> That beats all understanding.

Walpole* and Chesterfield† wrote in a very different tone indeed, each of them being by far too fine a gentleman to give way to such outbursts of witty ill-nature. These men of society dealt chiefly in the epigram of compliment. Wal-

* Horace Walpole, born 1717, died 1797.
† Born 1694, died 1773.

pole did, indeed, write a very savage epigram on Admiral Vernon,* among others; and Chesterfield said of a tall dull man—

> Unlike my subject now shall be my song,
> It shall be witty and it sha'n't be long.

Still, both of them were most at home in agreeable hyperbole. Thus Walpole addressed the following to Madame de Damas 'on her learning English:'

> Though British accents your attention fire,
> You cannot learn so fast as we admire;
> Scholars like you but slowly can improve,
> For who would teach you but the verb 'I love'?

Lord Chesterfield, 'on seeing a young Jacobite lady dressed in orange ribbons,' wrote:

> Say, lovely traitor, where's the jest
> Of wearing orange on thy breast,
> While that breast upheaving shows
> The whiteness of the rebel rose?

Of the latter writer's miscellaneous pieces, all of which are characterised by elegance and point, the following is an enjoyable example:

> What do scholars and bards, and astronomers wise,
> Mean by stuffing our heads with nonsense and lies?
> By telling us Venus must always appear
> In a car, or a shell, or a twinkling star,
> Drawn by sparrows, or swans, or dolphins, or doves,
> Attended in form by the graces and loves?
> That ambrosia and nectar is all she will taste,
> And her passports to hearts on a belt round her waist!

* On the Admiral's appointment to preside over the herring-fishery. It should be premised that Vernon had made himself conspicuous in Parliament by his rancorous speeches:

> Long in the senate had brave Vernon rail'd,
> And all mankind with bitter tongue assail'd;
> Sick of his noise, we wearied Heav'n with pray'r,
> In his own element to place the tar.
> The gods at length have yielded to our wish,
> And bade him rule o'er Billingsgate and Fish.

Without all this bustle, I saw the bright dame;
To supper last night to Pulteney's she came,
In a good warm sedan, no fine open car,
Two chairmen her doves, and a flambeau her star.
No nectar she drank, no ambrosia she eat,
Her cup was plain claret, a chicken her meat;
Nor wanted a cestus her bosom to grace,
For Richmond that night had lent her her face.

One of the most skilful and witty epigrammatists in the language is David Garrick,* who is generally regarded as an actor and nothing more (though, to be sure, that is enough!), whereas he wrote a fair amount of verse, and much of it in a strain and of a quality which would have done credit to a professional poetaster. It is of all sorts and sizes, ranging from the full-blown copy of verses (such as the admirable ones addressed to Mrs. Crewe) to the occasional couplet or quatrain. In the latter kind of production Garrick is eminently happy; whether in compliment or in satire, he is equally felicitous. We have seen how he wrote about poor Goldsmith. Equally well known is his couplet upon John Hill:

For physic and farces his equal there scarce is,
His farces are physic, his physic a farce is.

Not so familiar is his epigram on the same individual in reference to Hill's censure of Garrick's pronunciation of 'u' for 'i':

If 'tis true, as you say, that I've injured a letter,
I'll change my note soon, and, I hope, for the better.
May the just rights of letters, as well as of men,
Hereafter be fix'd by the tongue and the pen.
Most devoutly I wish they may both have their due,
And that *I* may be never mistaken for *you*.

Few, perhaps, are aware that the hackneyed quotation—

When doctrines meet with general approbation,
It is not heresy, but reformation—

occurs in one of Garrick's smaller trifles in this way. This,

* Born 1716, died 1779.

too, is excellent. It is 'On a certain Lord giving a large Sum for a House:'

So many thousands for a house,
For you, of all the world, Lord Mouse!
A little house would best accord
With you, my very little lord!
And then exactly match'd would be
Your house and hospitality.

Byrom's best epigram is that with which his name is most universally associated:*

God bless the King—I mean the Faith's Defender;
God bless—no harm in blessing—the Pretender;
But who Pretender is, and who is King,
God bless us all—that's quite another thing!

His next best is on the subject of Prior's long and tedious work, *Solomon on the Vanity of the World:*

Wise Solomon, with all his rambling doubts,
Might talk two hours, I guess, or thereabouts;
And yet, quoth he, 'my elders to their shame,
Kept silence all, nor answer did they frame.'
Dear me! what else but silence could they keep?
He, to be sure, had talk'd them all asleep!

Robert Fergusson,† one of the ill-fated 'inheritors of unfulfilled renown,' wrote as follows upon a lady who painted herself:

When, by some misadventure crossed,
The banker hath his fortune lost,
Credit his instant need supplies,
And for a moment blinds our eyes.

So Delia, when her beauty's flown,
Trades on a bottom not her own;
And labours to escape detection
By putting on a false complexion.

* John Byrom, born 1691, died 1763. † Born 1750, died 1744.

He also wrote the following, on being asked which of three sisters was most beautiful:

When Paris gave his voice, in Ida's grove,
For the resistless Venus, Queen of Love,
'Twas no great task to pass a judgment there,
When she alone was exquisitely fair.

But here, what could his ablest judgment teach,
When wisdom, power, and beauty reign in each?
The youth, nonpluss'd, behov'd to join with me,
And wish the apple had been cut in three.

This is very neatly phrased, though the idea of the quatrain be not fresh. Fergusson has several other longer pieces, chiefly humorous, which will repay perusal, if some allowance be made here and there for a little exuberance of expression and coarseness of topic. One of the pieces is called 'The Flea'!

We come now, finally, to the parodies of Hawkins Browne, and Lloyd and Colman.

Those of the first named of the trio* are on the general topic and heading of *A Pipe of Tobacco*, and include imitations of the style of Colley Cibber, Ambrose Philips, Thomson, Pope, Young, and Swift. The burlesque of Pope is certainly among the best, if not the best. Here is a portion of it:

Blest leaf! whose aromatic gales dispense
To templars modesty, to parsons sense:
So raptured priests, at famed Dodona's shrine,
Drank inspiration from the steam divine.
Poison that cures, a vapour that affords
Content more solid than the smile of lords;
Rest to the weary, to the hungry food,
The last kind refuge of the wise and good.
Inspired by thee, dull cits adjust the scale
Of Europe's peace, when other statesmen fail.
By thee protected, and thy sister beer,
Poets rejoice, nor think the bailiff near.

* Born 1706, died 1760.

Nor less the critic owns thy genial aid,
While supperless he plies the piddling trade.
What though to love and soft delights a foe,
By ladies hated, hated by the beau.
Yet social freedom, love to courts unknown,
Fair health, fair truth, and virtue are thy own.
Come to thy poet, come with healing wings,
And let me taste thee unexcised by kings.

The burlesque of Thomson has been praised, but has not much inherent fun in it. A parody which is all parody is never of the highest value.

Lloyd and Colman's travesties of the odes of Gray and Mason had also much acceptance in their day, but they are not so amusing as they might be. They singularly lack the light touch that might have been expected from two such collaborateurs; to tell the truth, indeed, they are emphatically heavy. The following, from the 'Ode to Obscurity,' is about the most entertaining passage we can find:

All, all is thine. Thy powerful sway
The thronged poetic hordes obey;
Tho' in the van of mem'ry proud t' appear,
At thy command they darken in the rear.
What tho' the modern tragic strain
For nine whole days protract thy reign?
Yet thro' the nine, like whelps of currish kind,
Scarcely it lives, weak, impotent, and blind.
Sacred to thee the Crambo Rhyme,
The motley forms of pantomime.
For thee from eunuch's throat still loves to flow
The soothing sadness of his warbled woe:
Each day to thee falls pamphlet clean,
Each month a new-born magazine.
Hear, then, O goddess, hear thy vot'ry's prayer!
And, if thou deign'st to take one moment's care,
Attend thy Bard, who duly pays
The tribute of his votive lays.
Whose Muse still offers at thy sacred shrine;
Thy Bard, who calls thee his, and makes him thine.

O sweet Forgetfulness, supreme,
Rule supine o'er ev'ry theme,
O'er each sad subject, o'er each soothing strain,
Of mine, O Goddess, stretch thy awful reign!
Nor let Mem'ry steal one note
Which this rude hand to thee hath wrote!
So shalt thou save me from the poet's shame,
Tho' on the letter'd rubric Dodsley post my name.

Lloyd did much better than this when left to himself. His shorter pieces have considerable buoyancy and even vivacity now and then; his *Fables* contain more than one time-honoured and familiar line; whilst his principal poem, *The Actor*, abounds in passages happily conceived and happily expressed. It is generally didactic in its tone, but it now and then deviates into satire somewhat after the model of Churchill, though, as a matter of fact, Churchill's *Rosciad* came after Lloyd's *Actor*, and may possibly have been suggested by it.* Lloyd is especially severe in one place upon the 'professional' who devotes himself too much to mimicry of others. He says:

But let the generous actor still forbear
To copy features with a mimic's care!
'Tis a poor skill which every fool can reach,
A vile stage-custom, honoured in the breach.
Worse as more close the disengenuous art
But shows the wanton looseness of the heart.
When I behold a wretch, of talents mean,
Drag private foibles on the public scene,
Forsaking Nature's fair and open road
To mark some whim, some strange peculiar mode,
Fired with disgust I loath his servile plan,
Despise the mimic, and abhor the man.
Go to the lame, to hospitals repair,
And hunt for humour for distortions there!
Fill up the measure of the motley whim
With shrug, wink, snuffle, and convulsive limb.

* *The Actor* was published in 1760; Robert Lloyd, its author, was born in 1733, and died in 1764.

Then shame at once, to please a trifling age,
Good sense, good manners, virtue, and the stage!

In 1772 Dr. Aikin published a Collection of English Songs, from which we take the following amusing lines—the composition of a writer named Lisle, the Christian name or names of whom remain unknown. Mr. W. M. Rossetti opines, from the peculiarity of rhyming 'fault' with thought,' that the poem was written somewhere about 1720-50. It has some sort of affinity to Coleridge's epigram from the French, which we give farther on. It is called 'Eurydice:'

When Orpheus went down to the regions below,
Which men are forbidden to see;
He tuned up his lyre, as old histories show,
To set his Eurydice free.

All hell was astonished a person so wise
Should rashly endanger his life,
And venture so far; but how vast their surprise
When they heard that he came for his wife!

To find out a punishment due for his fault
Old Pluto long puzzled his brain;
But hell had not torments sufficient, he thought,—
So he gave him his wife back again.

But pity succeeding soon vanquished his heart,
And, pleased with his playing so well,
He took her again in reward of his art,—
Such merit had music in hell.

CHAPTER VII.

COWPER AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES.

William Cowper—'The Progress of Error'—'The Task'—'Secundem Artem'—Epigrams—'The Rolliad' and its authors—John Wolcot—'Farewell Odes'—Parodies—William Gifford—'The Baviad'—Richard Porson—Epigrams—George Crabbe—'The Village'—Hannah More—'Bas Bleu'—William Blake—'Orator Prig'—Robert Burns.

CHAPTER VII.

COWPER AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES.

BETWEEN the time of Cowper and that brilliant period which acknowledges Byron as its master-mind in wit and humour, there comes an interval, not filled indeed by many voices, but marked by song and speech, on the part of a select few, of very great excellence and charm. This is the interval in which Cowper in England and Burns in Scotland—both of them the victim of a mistaken and deplorable religionism, not religion—held respective sway; the one as the gentle humourist of the parlour, the other as the savage satirist of the country-side. Side by side with them are the authors of *The Rolliad* as representatives, along with Wolcot, of political satire; Gifford as the representative of literary satire, in his *Baviad* and *Mœviad;* and Porson, as the representative of epigram—Crabbe and Blake and Hannah More being included in the interval by a licence which may possibly be disputed. Hannah More, indeed, died thirty-three years after Cowper, Crabbe thirty-two, and Blake twenty-seven—all of them, too, died after Byron. Still, on the other hand, the lady was for more than fifty years contemporary with the author of *The Task;* Crabbe was contemporary with him for rather less than fifty years; whilst Blake was contemporary with him for rather more than forty. It is not, therefore, without some reason for the act that we class them along with Cowper in this chapter.

With the general public Cowper* takes rank as a humourist almost wholly on the strength of his 'John Gilpin.' His 'Eyes or No Eyes' is also very popular and

* William Cowper, born 1731, died 1800. *The Progress of Error* appeared in 1782; *The Task* in 1784.

familiar; but apart from these two admirable, if hackneyed pieces, he would not, we suspect, be regarded vulgarly as in any sense a humourist at all. Yet how delightful is Cowper in what we may call his characteristically humorous mood—the quiet one, in which the persiflage is so light and bright that it is not every one who will detect it, and of which his poems absolutely bristle with examples! There are, of course, occasions on which Cowper essays the Juvenalian manner, and then we have such passages as this upon 'the trifler:'

> Rufillus, exquisitely formed by rule,
> Not of the moral but the dancing school,
> Wonders at Clodio's follies in a tone
> As tragical as others at his own.
> He cannot drink five bottles, bilk the score,
> Then kill a constable and drink five more;
> But he can draw a pattern, make a tart,
> And has the ladies' etiquette by heart.
> Go, fool; and arm in arm with Clodio, plead
> Your cause before a bar you little dread;
> But know the law which bids the drunkard die
> Is far too just to pass the trifler by.

Or, from the same poem, *The Progress of Error*, this:

> Accomplishments have taken virtue's place,
> And wisdom falls before exterior grace;
> We slight the precious kernel of the stone,
> And toil to polish its rough coat alone.
> A just deportment, manners graced with ease,
> Elegant phrase, and figure formed to please,
> Are qualities that seem to comprehend
> Whatever parents, guardians, schools intend.
> Hence an unfurnished and a listless mind,
> Though busy, trifling; empty, though refined;
> Hence all that interferes, and dares to clash,
> With indolence and luxury, is trash;
> While learning, once the man's exclusive pride,
> Seems verging fast towards the female side.

At other times, again, we get a strain like this from *Conversation:*

—The solemn fop; significant and budge;
A fool with judges, amongst fools a judge;
He says but little, and that little said
Owes all its weight, like loaded dice, to lead.
His wit invites you by his looks to come,
But when you knock it never is at home.*
'Tis like a parcel sent you by the stage,
Some handsome present, as your hopes presage, . . .
'Tis heavy, bulky, and bids fair to prove
An absent friend's fidelity and love;
But when unpacked your disappointment groans
To find it stuffed with brickbats, earth, and stones.

But Cowper is not happiest in this vein.

Of Cowper in the vein of humour that at once suits him best, and is most characteristic of him, we do not think we could have a better instance than is afforded by the introduction to *The Task:*

Time was, when clothing sumptuous or for use,
Save their own painted skins, our sires had none.
As yet black breeches were not, satin smooth,
Or velvet soft, or plush with shaggy pile; . . .
Those barbarous ages past, succeeded next
The birthday of invention, weak at first,
Dull in design, and clumsy to perform.
Joint-stools were then created; on three legs
Upborne they stood;—three legs upholding firm
A massy slab, in fashion square or round.
On such a stool immortal Alfred sat,
And swayed the sceptre in his infant realms;
And such in ancient halls and mansions drear
May still be seen, but perforated sore
And drilled in holes the solid oak is found,
By worms voracious eaten through and through.
At length a generation more refined

* Almost identical with an epigram attributed to Pope, and quoted ante.

Improved the simple plan; made three legs four,
Gave them a twisted form vermicular,
And o'er the seat, with plenteous wadding stuffed,
Induced a splendid cover, green and blue,
Yellow and red, of tapestry richly wrought
And woven close, or needlework sublime.
There might ye see the peony spread wide,
The full-blown rose, the shepherd and his lass,
Lap-dog and lambkin with black staring eyes,
And parrots with twin cherries in their beak.
Now came the cane from India, smooth and bright
With Nature's varnish, severed into stripes,
That interlaced each other; these supplied
Of texture firm a lattice-work, that braced
The new machine, and it became a chair.
But restless was the chair; the back erect
Distressed the weary loins, that felt no ease;
The slippery seat betrayed the sliding-part
That pressed it, and the feet hung dangling down,
Anxious in vain to find the distant floor.
These for the rich; the rest, whom fate had placed
In modest mediocrity, content
With base materials, sat on well-tanned hides
Obdurate and unyielding, glassy smooth,
With here and there a tuft of crimson yarn,
Or scarlet crewel in the cushion fixed;
If cushion might be called which harder seemed
Than the firm oak of which the frame was formed.
No want of timber then was felt or feared
In Albion's happy isle. The timber stood
Ponderous, and fixed by its own massy weight.
But elbows still were wanting; these, some say,
An alderman of Cripplegate contrived,
And some ascribe the invention to a priest
Burly and big, and studious of his ease.
But rude at first, and not with easy slope
Receding wide, they pressed against the ribs,
And bruised the side, and elevated high
Taught the raised shoulders to invade the ears.

Long time elapsed or ere our rugged sires
Complained, though incommodiously pent in,
And ill at ease behind. The ladies first
'Gan murmur, as became the softer sex.
Ingenious fancy, never better pleased
Than when employed to accommodate the fair,
Heard the sweet moan with pity, and devised
The soft settee; one elbow at each end,
And in the midst an elbow it received,
United yet divided, twain at once.
So sit two kings of Brentford on one throne;
And so two citizens who take the air,
Close packed and smiling, in a chaise and one.
But relaxation of the languid frame,
By soft recumbency of outstretched limbs,
Was bliss reserved for happier days;—so slow
The growth of what is excellent, so hard
To attain perfection in this nether world.
Thus first Necessity invented stools,
Convenience next suggested elbow-chairs,
And Luxury the accomplished sofa next.

It seems to us that nothing could be more thoroughly satisfying in its way than this. The tone is perfect in conception, and is kept up perfectly, without a break; the keynote once struck, the harmony is carefully preserved. To be sure, *The Task* is not everywhere written in this strain. How much more readable would it be if it were so written! Still, the light bright passages are agreeably numerous, and are in themselves in every way acceptable. Of course, had Cowper written throughout in the temper of this introduction, *The Task* would have run very close upon the *Rape of the Lock*. As it is, it contains some of the poet's very finest work, and still remains a monument to his distinguished powers.

Nevertheless, Cowper is very happy in his miscellaneous efforts—in those little trifles in which he embodied the quiet humorousness that is his greatest charm. How entirely in keeping, for example, is the short tale in verse called the 'Colubriad'!—short indeed, yet too long to quote

after the liberal quotations already made. How perfect, too, are the lines on the 'Rose,' though perhaps a little too sentimental for our purpose. The lines written 'On observing some Names of Little Note' form another and a familiar example of what we mean. Who, indeed, does not remember the last three?—

> There goes my lady, and there goes the squire,
> There goes the parson, O illustrious spark!
> And there, scarce less illustrious, goes the clerk!

Cowper has several amusing parodies scattered through his minor pieces. Here, among them, is a bit of a burlesque ode, 'Secundum Artem:'

> Shall I begin with *Ah*, or *Oh?*
> Be sad? *oh!* yes. Be glad? *ah!* no.
> Light subjects suit not grave Pindaric ode,
> Which walks in metre down the Strophic road.
> But let the sober matron wear
> Her own mechanic sober air;
> *Ah me!* ill suits, *alas!* the sprightly jig,
> Long robes of ermine, or Sir Cloudesley's wig.
> Come, placid Dullness, gently come,
> And all my faculties benumb;
> Let thought turn exile, while the vacant mind
> To tricky words and pretty phrase confin'd,
> Pumping for trim description's art,
> To win the ear, neglects the heart.
> So shall thy sister Taste's peculiar sons,
> Lineal descendants from the Goths and Huns,
> Struck with the true and grand sublime
> Of *rhythm* converted into *rhyme*,
> Court the quaint Muse, and con her lessons o'er,
> When sleep the sluggish waves by Granta's shore:
> There shall each poet share and trim,
> Stretch, cramp, or lop the verse's limb;
> While rebel Wit beholds them with disdain,
> And Fancy flies aloft, nor heeds their servile chain.

Here are some 'Lines after the Manner of Homer, descriptive of the Opening of a Hamper:'

The straw-stuffed hamper with his ruthless steel
He opened, cutting sheer the inserted cords
Which bound the lid and lip secure. Forth came
The rustling package; first, bright straw of wheat,
Or oats, or barley; next, a bottle, green,
Throat-full, clear spirits the contents, distilled
Drop after drop odorous, by the art
Of the fair mother of his friend—the Rose.

Of epigram, too, Cowper has some successful specimens,—as this on his garden-shed, recalling some lines already quoted from the poet Young:*

Instead of a pound or two, spending a mint
Must serve me at least, I believe, with a hint
That, building and building, a man may be driven,
At last, out o' doors, and have no house to live in.

Again, on polygamy:

If John marries Mary, and Mary alone,
'Tis a very good match between Mary and John;
Should John wed a score, O the claws and the scratches!
It can't be a match—it's a bundle of matches!

It is when one reads such ebullitions as these that one is grateful to Cowper's stern 'religious' creed for not entirely crushing out his native humour.

The *Rolliad*, to which reference has been made, was the title given to a series of political satires, published in the interest of the Whig party from 1784 onwards. It professed originally to be a review of an epic poem, which was of course imaginary; and the name of *Rolliad* was given to the effusion after Colonel (eventually Lord) Rolle, against whom the satire was in the first place directed. The dedication of the work to Rolle is perhaps the most successful portion of the whole. It is conceived in the true spirit of persiflage. The body of the work has not nearly so much

* See ante, p. 137.

sprightliness; nor is there anything particularly remembrable in the *Probationary Odes* and *Political Eclogues* which followed the *Rolliad* proper. Pitt, Lord Liverpool, Lord Thurlow, Thomas Warton, Sir John Hawkins, and Macpherson ('Ossian') were attacked with considerable bitterness, but not, to modern tastes, with any remarkable amount of wit. The *Rolliad* has, in fact, shared the fate of most efforts of the kind. Written for the purposes of the moment, it has only survived that moment by reason of the reputation it excited and the celebrity of the men who helped to produce it. Among these were Richard Tickell, grandson of good Thomas; George Ellis, the antiquary; Sir R. Adair, and General Burgoyne; Dr. (French) Lawrence being the chief editor of the satires.

Next to the *Rolliad*, the political satire of the day was wielded most trenchantly by John Wolcot,* who, as 'Peter Pindar,' is still famous wherever the English language is spoken. His career was mainly that of a lampoonist—his chief objects of attack being the King (George III.) and the President of the Royal Society (Sir Joseph Banks). These he ridiculed in such works as *Royal Visits*, *Lyric Odes*, &c., with a pungency which one is compelled to reprobate, but equally compelled to admire as an exhibition of literary and satiric art. The poor monarch especially was unmercifully treated by the wit, who pilloried him in every possible form on every possible occasion. Wolcot was a master of sarcastic narrative, in which he enshrined some of the most ludicrous of the current stories of the king's infirmities. How well Wolcot could tell an anecdote can be shown *in petto*—the following being an extract from one of the *Farewell Odes*, published in 1786:

A shabby fellow chanced one day to meet
The British Roscius in the street,
    Garrick, of whom our nation justly brags.
The fellow hugged him with a kind embrace.
'Good sir, I do not recollect your face,'
    Quoth Garrick. 'No?' replied the man of rags;

* Born 1738, died 1819. His *Works* were collected in 1794-1801.

'The boards of Drury you and I have trod
Full many a time together, I am sure.'
'When?' with an oath, cried Garrick; 'for, by God,
I never saw that face of yours before!
What characters, I pray,
Did you and I together play?'
'Lord!' quoth the fellow, 'think not that I mock—
When you played Hamlet, sir, I played the cock!'

In addition to his *Odes* and other satires, Wolcot wrote a mock epic called the *Lousiad*, which is fit to be classed together with the *Gymnasiad** and other vulgarisations of unhappy verse. It is clever, but also very coarse. Of Wolcot's miscellaneous pieces, of which the name is legion, the following, in parody of Walton's simple style, is not the least amusing:

Why flyest thou away with feare?
Trust me, there's nought of danger here;
I have no wicked hooke
All covered with a snaring bait,
Alas, to tempt thee to thy fate,
And dragge thee from the brooke!

O harmless tenant of the floode,
I do not wish to spill thy bloode,
For Nature unto thee
Perchance hath given a tender wife,
And children dear, to charm thy life,
As she hath done for me!

Enjoy thy stream, O harmless fish!
And, when an angler for his dish,
Through gluttony's vile sin,
Attempts, a wretch, to pull thee *out*,
God give thee strength, O gentle trout,
To pull the raskall *in!*

The wonderful turgidity of Dr. Johnson's verse is also very acutely criticised in this other passage:

* By Paul Whitehead (1710-1774).

I own I like not Johnson's turgid style,
That gives an inch the importance of a mile,
Casts of manure a wagon-load around,
To raise a simple daisy from the ground;
Uplifts the club of Hercules—for what?
To crush a butterfly or brain a gnat?
Creates a whirlwind from the earth, to draw
A goose's feather or exalt a straw;
Sets wheels on wheels in motion—such a clatter—
To force up one poor pipperkin of water;
Bids ocean labour with tremendous roar,
To heave a cockle-shell upon the shore;
Alike in every theme his pompous art,
Heaven's awful thunder or a rumbling cart.

The legitimate satire of the period is represented, we repeat, by William Gifford,* who, so far from being a brother-in-arms of Wolcot's, was his fierce opponent. The 'Epistle to Peter Pindar,' vehement as it is, is not, however, so celebrated, by name even—for assuredly no one reads the works of Gifford nowadays — as the *Baviad* and the *Mæviad*, the two poems in which Gifford attacked respectively the Della Cruscans and the heavy tragedy of his day. In these performances Gifford tried to emulate the success of Pope and Young, and so far succeeded that they were tremendously popular for a time. They do not, of course, take anything like a similar place in literature. Still, they have some very effective passages. Thus, the whole tribe of Della Cruscans are assailed in all the unblushingness of their mutual admiration:

Lo, Della Crusca! in his closet pent,
He toils to give the crude conception vent—
Abortive thoughts that right or wrong confound,
Truth sacrificed to letters, sense to sound;
False glare, incongruous images, combine;
And noise and nonsense clatter through the line.
'Tis done. Her house the generous Piozzi lends,

* Born 1757, died 1826. He published the *Baviad* in 1794, and the *Mæviad* in 1795.

And thither summons her bluestocking friends;
The summons her bluestocking friends obey,
Lured by the love of poetry—and tea.
The Bard steps forth, in birthday splendour drest,
His right hand graceful waving o'er his breast;
His left extending, so that all might see
A roll inscribed 'The Wreath of Liberty.'
So forth he steps, and with complacent air
Bows round the circle, and assumes the chair;
With lemonade he gargles first his throat,
Then sweetly preludes to the liquid note;
And now 'tis silence all. 'Genius or Muse'—
Thus while the flowery subject he pursues,
A wild delirium round th' assembly flies;
Unusual lustre shoots from Emma's eyes;
Luxurious Arno drivels as he stands,
And Anna frisks, and Laura claps her hands.
O wretched man! And dost thou toil to please
At this late hour such prurient ears as these?
Is thy poor pride contented to receive
Such transitory fame as fools can give?
Fools who, unconscious of the critic's laws,
Rain in such showers their indistinct applause.

The satire upon separate individuals is very biting; but, unfortunately for the satirist, they are almost all of them persons whom the world has willingly let die. Only two of them—Mrs. Thrale and Mrs. 'Perdita' Robinson—are at all remembered nowadays. Of the one he says:

See Thrale's gay widow with a satchel roam
And bring in pomp laborious nothings home;

of the other:

See Robinson forget her state, and move
On crutches towards the grave, to 'Light o' love.'

The *Mæviad*, which came after the *Baviad*, is less powerful than its predecessor, as such continuations are very apt to be. Yet it has some remarks upon the drama of the day by no means undeserving of attention.

Porson* is known now as a writer of *jeux d'esprit*, and little more, his 'unconsidered trifles' having obtained an immortality denied to his monuments of classic learning. These are to a great extent superseded; his *bons mots* in verse are, as a rule, so admirable as to be practically deathless. His greatest feat, perhaps, was writing a hundred epigrams in one night, on the subject of Pitt's drinking habits. The best of this 'century' of wit is probably that which follows:

When Billy found he scarce could stand,
'Help, help!' he cried, and stretched his hand,
To faithful Henry calling.
Quoth Hal, 'My friend, I'm sorry for't,
'Tis not my practice to support
A Minister that's falling.'

'Faithful Henry' was Dundas, Viscount Melville. Again, Porson wrote:

'Who's up?' inquired Burke of a friend at the door.
'O, no one,' said Paddy, 'for Pitt's on the floor.'

Some of the 'century' are but trivial stuff. On the other hand, this on Dr. Jowett of Cambridge is exceedingly happy:

A little garden little Jowett made,
And fenced it with a little palisade;
A little taste hath little Dr. Jowett;
This little garden doth a little show it.

So is this, on an unknown Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge:

Here lies a Doctor of Divinity,
Who was a Fellow, too, of Trinity;
He knew as much about Divinity
As other Fellows do of Trinity.

This reminds one of—

* Richard Porson, born 1759, died 1808.

The Germans in Greek
Are sadly to seek;
Not five in five score,
But ninety-five more;
All, save only Hermann,
And—Hermann's a German.

This, however, Porson borrowed from a Greek original. He was not less uncomplimentary to German temperance:

I went to Frankfort, and got drunk
With that most learn'd Professor Brunck:
I went to Wortz, and got more drunken
With that more learn'd Professor Ruhnken.

Finally, let us lighten up the page with an epigram by Porson which includes one of the best puns upon record. He had been asked to write something that would rhyme with the endings of the Latin gerunds, and he immediately produced the following:

When Dido found Æneas would not come,
She mourn'd in silence, and was *Di-do-dum*(*b*).

This is one of the most thoroughly ingenious things we ever met with.

Crabbe*—whom Byron very untruthfully described as 'Nature's sternest painter, yet the best'—may be very rapidly dismissed. He cannot be said to have possessed more than a scintilla, if so much, of wit or humour; his merits being a Dutch-like minuteness of detail in his descriptions, and a certain amount of vivid indignation. It is in virtue of the latter, which was sometimes accompanied by incisiveness of expression, that we give him a place in this volume, quoting his picture of the village apothecary in the workhouse as the best possible specimen of the sort which can be procured throughout the length and breadth of his generally dreary pages:

* George Crabbe (1754-1832). *The Village* appeared in 1783.

Anon a figure enters, quaintly neat,
All pride and business, bustle and conceit;
With looks unaltered by these scenes of woe,
With speed that, entering, speaks his haste to go;
He bids the gazing throng around to fly,
And carries fate and physic in his eye;
A potent quack, long versed in human ills,
Who first insults the victim whom he kills;
Whose murderous hand a drowsy bench protect,
And whose most tender mercy is neglect.

Paid by the parish for attendance here,
He wears contempt upon his sapient sneer;
In haste he seeks the bed where misery lies,
Impatience marked in his averted eyes;
And some habitual queries hurried o'er,
Without reply he rushes to the door;
His drooping patient, long inured to pain,
And long unheeded, knows remonstrance vain;
He ceases now the feeble help to crave
Of man, and silent sinks into the grave.

Hannah More*—whose name is associated in the minds of most people with works of an 'edifying character'—is, like Crabbe, about the last person, perhaps, whom one would expect to find figuring in this connection. Yet it must be confessed that she produced at least one work which displays the possession of keen social observation, and some capacity for hitting folly as it flies. The work in question is that in which she reprobates the mode of conversation in her time—a mode which, if the following is a true description, must have been exceedingly disagreeable:

Where the dire Circle keeps its station,
Each common phrase is an oration;
And cracking fans, and whispering Misses,
Compose their conversation blisses.
The Matron marks the goodly show,
While the tall daughter eyes the Beau—

* Born 1745, died 1833.

The frigid Beau! Ah! luckless fair,
'Tis not for you that studied air;
Ah! not for you that sidelong glance,
And all that charming nonchalance;
Ah! not for you the three long hours
He worshipped the 'Cosmetic powers;'
That finished head which breathes perfume,
And kills the nerves of half the room;
And all the murders meant to lie
In that large languishing gray eye.
Desist—less wild the attempt would be
To warm the snows of Rhodope.
Too cold to feel, too proud to feign,
For him you're wise and fair in vain;
In vain to charm him you intend,—
Self is his object, aim, and end.

Chill shade of that affected Peer
Who dreaded Mirth, come safely here!
For here no vulgar joy effaces
Thy rage for polish, *ton*, and graces.
Cold Ceremony's leaden hand
Waves o'er the room her poppy wand.
Arrives the stranger; every guest
Conspires to torture the distressed.
At once they rise. So have I seen—
You guess the simile I mean;
Take what comparison you please,
The crowded streets, the swarming bees,
The pebbles on the shores that lie,
The stars which form the galaxy;
These serve to embellish what is said,
And show, besides, that one has read.
At once they rise—the astonished guest
Back in a corner slinks, distressed;
Scared at the many bowing round,
And shocked at her own voice's sound;
Forgot the thing she meant to say,
Her words, half uttered, die away;

In sweet oblivion down she sinks,
And of her next appointment thinks.
While her loud neighbour on the right
Boasts what she has to do to-night;
So very much, you'd swear her pride is
To match the labours of Alcides!
'Tis true, in hyperbolic measure,
She nobly calls her labours pleasure;
In this, unlike Alcmena's son,
She never means they should be done;
Her fancy of no limits dreams,
No *ne plus ultra* stops her schemes;
Twelve! she'd have scorned the paltry round,
No pillars would have marked her bound;
Calpe and Abyla in vain
Had nodded 'cross the opposing main;
A circumnavigator she
On *Ton's* illimitable sea.

This is from the poem called *Bas-Bleu*,* or the Blue-stocking, and may profitably be compared with the passage in a very similar style which has already been quoted from the works of Swift.† A comparison of the two would seem to show that if conversation in fashionable circles altered at all from the time of Anne to that of George III., it was in the direction of a change from scandal and *double entendre* to dulness and pedantry—a change for the better, of course, yet not very inspiriting.

If an apology is necessary for including in a work like this the names of Crabbe and Hannah More, it is even more required in the case of William Blake,‡ who is associated, in most ordinary minds, with all that is wild and unreal in thought and fancy. Yet there is surely, as a former critic has suggested, sufficient 'quaintness and freakishness' in the following little *morceau* to supply such apology as may be needed. If it winds up seriously, it has, at any rate, a slyness of suggestion about it which brings it within the category of the humorous. It runs:

* Published in 1786. See ante, p. 114.
‡ Born 1757, died 1828.

I asked of my dear friend orator Prig,
'What's the first part of oratory?' He said, 'A great wig.'
'And what is the second?' Then, dancing a jig,
And bowing profoundly, he said, 'A great wig.'
'And what is the third?' Then he snored like a pig,
And, puffing his cheeks out, replied, 'A great wig.'—
So if to a painter the question you push,
'What the first part of painting?' he'll say, 'A paint-brush.'
'And what is the second?' With most modest blush,
He'll smile like a cherub, and say, 'A paint-brush.'
'And what is the third?' He'll bow like a rush,
With a leer in his eye, and reply, 'A paint-brush.'
Perhaps this is all a painter can want;
But, look yonder,—that home is the home of Rembrandt.

We began our notice of this period with Cowper, and we end it with Robert Burns. In other words, we began with a gentle humourist and end with a fierce one. Of Burns, indeed, more than of most poets, might it be said that he learned in suffering what he taught in song. The victim of religious hypocrisy and aristocratic neglect, he turned his satire in both of these directions, and has left behind him some of the most savage indictments in the whole range of humorous invective. He has dealt to pseudo-piety, in particular, a blow from which it has not recovered, and never will recover. One has only to mention 'The Holy Fair,' the 'Address to the Unco Guid,' and 'Holy Willie's Prayer,' in order to impress this fact upon the reader. In the case of the first of these, how pungent is the description of the 'hell-fire' preacher:

Now a' the congregation o'er
Is silent expectation;
For Moodie speels the holy door,
Wi' tidings o' damnation.
Should Hornie, as in ancient days,
'Mang sons o' God present him,
The vera sight o' Moodie's face
To's ain het hame had sent him
Wi' fright that day.

Hear how he clears the points o' faith
Wi' rattlin' an' wi' thumpin'!
Now meekly calm, now wild in wrath,
He's stampin' an' he's jumpin'!
His lengthened chin, his turned-up snout,
His eldritch squeel an' gestures,
O how they fire the heart devout,
Like cantharidian plasters,
On sic a day!

Mark, too, the opening of his 'Address' to the 'rigidly righteous:'

O ye wha are so guid yoursel,
Sae pious and sae holy,
Ye've naught to do but mark and tell
Your neebour's fauts and folly!
Whose life is like a weel-gaun mill,
Supply'd wi' store o' water;
The heapet happer's ebbing still,
And still the clap plays clatter.

Hear me, ye venerable Core,
As counsel for poor mortals
That frequent pass dame Wisdom's door,
For glaikit Folly's portals;
I, for their thoughtless, careless sakes,
Would here propone defences,
Their donsie tricks, their black mistakes,
Their failings and mischances.

Ye see your state wi' theirs compared,
And shudder at the niffer,
But cast a moment's fair regard,
What maks the mighty differ:
Discount what scant occasion gave,
That purity ye pride in,
And (what's aft mair than a' the lave)
Your better art o' hiding.

Think, when your castigated pulse
Gies now and then a wallop,

What raging must his veins convulse,
That still eternal gallop:
Wi' wind and tide fair i' your tail,
Right on ye scud your seaway;
But in the teeth o' baith to sail,
It maks an unco leeway.

How bitter, though unconscious, is the self-condemnation which he puts into the mouth of 'Holy Willie'! Has smug self-satisfaction—the supreme self-contentment of the 'elect'—ever been so effectively portrayed?

O thou wha in the Heavens dost dwell,
Wha, as it pleases best thysel',
Sends ane to Heaven and ten to Hell,
A' for thy glory,
And no for onie guid or ill
They've done afore thee!

I bless and praise thy matchless might,
Whan thousands thou hast left in night,
That I am here before thy sight,
For gifts an' grace,
A burnin' an' a shinin' light
To a' this place. . . .

But yet, O Lord! confess I must,
At times I'm fash'd wi' fleshly lust,
An' sometimes, too, wi' warldly trust,
Vile self gets in;
But thou remembers we are dust,
Defil'd in sin. . . .

Maybe thou lets this fleshly thorn
Beset thy servant e'en and morn,
Lest he owre high and proud should turn,
'Cause he's sae gifted;
If sae, thy hand maun e'en be borne,
Until thou lift it.

For pure humour of a more kindly sort commend us, for

example, to the 'Address to the Toothache,' and to certain passages in 'The Twa Dogs' and 'Tam O'Shanter.' No notice of Burns's work, however, would be even tolerably complete without a reference to his epigrams, which are mainly of the biting sort, with (generally) more of indignation than of humour in them. Into these Burns seems to have distilled in many cases the concentrated essence of his scorn. Of 'a noted coxcomb' he writes:

Light lay the earth on Billy's breast,
His chicken-heart so tender;
But build a castle on his head,
His skull will prop it under.

On an inn at Inverary:

Whoe'er he be that sojourns here,
I pity much his case,
Unless he came to wait upon
The Lord their God, his Grace.

There's naething here but Highland pride,
And Highland scab and hunger;
If Providence has sent me here,
'Twas surely in his anger.

On the Earl of Galloway:

Bright ran thy line, O Galloway,
Through many a far-famed sire!
So ran the far-famed Roman Way,
So ended in a mire!

On one 'Wee Johnny:'

Whoe'er thou art, O reader, know
That death has murdered Johnnie!
An' here his body lies full low—
For soul he ne'er had ony.

On the other hand, Burns could now and then be as complaisant as, on other occasions, he was severe. On a certain Miss Scott he wrote:

O had each Scot of ancient times
Been, Jeanie Scott, as thou art,
The bravest heart on English ground
Had yielded like a coward.

Again, on a lady looking up the text at church :

Fair maid, you need not take the hint,
Nor idle texts pursue ;
'Twas *guilty sinners* that he meant,
Not *angels* such as you !

CHAPTER VIII.

BYRON AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES.

Byron the greatest wit and humourist of his generation—His individuality of style and thought—'Don Juan'—'The Vision of Judgment'—'English Bards'—Epigrams—Thomas Moore—Compared with Byron—'From the Hon. Henry ——'—Epigrams—'I could resign that eye of blue'—'The Anti-Jacobin Review'—Canning, Frere, and Gifford—'The Loves of the Triangles'—'The Progress of Man'—James and Horace Smith—'Rejected Addresses'—'Horace in London'—Epigrams—Theodore Hook—'Clubs'—Charles Morris—'The Contrast'—Henry Luttrell—'Letters to Julia'—Epigrams—Thomas Haynes Bayly—'Lord Harry has written a Novel'—'Don't talk of September'—Catherine Fanshawe—'Elegy'—Lord Holland—Epigrams—Richard Harris Barham—'Ingoldsby Legends'—Reginald Heber—Epigrams—Richard Brinsley Sheridan—'The Duenna'—'The School for Scandal'—Epigrams—Colman the Younger—'The Fat Single Gentleman'—Robert Southey—'To a Goose'—'The Devil's Thoughts'—'The Devil's Progress'—Samuel Taylor Coleridge—Epigrams—Leigh Hunt—'The Feast of the Poets'—'Blue Stocking Revels.'

CHAPTER VIII.

BYRON AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES.

No one could possibly have any hesitation in placing Byron at the head of all his generation both as a wit and as a humourist.* We may concede that he was surpassed in one respect by Moore. We do not forget that his was the time of the *Rejected Addresses* and of the *Anti-Jacobin*. We remember, too, that he had for contemporaries such poets of society as Theodore Hook, Captain Morris, Henry Luttrell, Haynes Bayly, and Miss Fanshawe; that dramatists like Sheridan and Colman wrote then in verse as well as prose; that occasional verse of a witty and humorous character was penned by men of the world like Lord Holland, Sydney Smith, Lord Erskine, Reginald Heber, and R. H. Barham; and that poets *par excellence* like Leigh Hunt, Shelley, Coleridge, Rogers, and others also broke out occasionally into lively and entertaining fancies. All this, even, does not prevent one from acknowledging that, though, for pure poetry, Byron has to acknowledge several rivals among his coeval brethren, yet in the field of persiflage and satire he is, on the whole, not only without rival, but without peer.

The statement, which may appear a little hazardous at first, appears so no longer when we remember, not only *Don Juan*, but the short series of works written in exactly the same vein, and not only the *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, but the several other pieces written in exactly the same manner. Add to these the numerous short *jeux d'esprit* produced by Byron in the course of his career, and reproduced in the pages of his works, and you have a body of wit and humour of an essentially individual kind, which it would be perfectly impossible to match, not only in the

* He was born in 1788, and died in 1824. *Don Juan* was published in 1819-1824; *English Bards* in 1809; *Beppo* in 1818; and *The Vision* in 1822.

productions of any one of his contemporaries, but of any number of those contemporaries. Of course Byron is most original and most powerful in the *Don Juan* series. In the *Bards* and in the Horatian imitations he was but following in the footsteps of his master Pope. It may also be said, even of *Don Juan* and its fellows, that Byron was here drawing either directly from Italian models, or from the suggestions afforded by the famous work of Frere. But to admit that this detracts in any way from the characteristic quality of Byron's style and thought would be to admit much more than would be warrantable. It is doubtless the case that the poet received a certain amount of impulse from the quarters named, but we make bold to say that this was all he received. He may have taken the hint from Pulci or from 'Whistlecraft,'* but that is all. The tone of *Don Juan* and its brethren is entirely Byron's—a tone of characteristic cynicism, showing itself chiefly in a bantering treatment of everything that came before him, whether of the heavens above, the earth beneath, or the waters under the earth. It is a tone to which nothing is sacred; which could be serious if it would, but which declines to be so, preferring to laugh rather than to cry, and laughing accordingly at all things, sacred or profane. The poet's peculiarities of style and thought are to be seen both in the slow, indolent character of his verse, and in the comments and reflections with which he interrupts the narrative. Both in *Don Juan* and in *Beppo* the story is sufficiently entertaining, and would seem to suggest that as a humorous novelist Byron might have made a name; but it is not in this, after all, that his forte lies. That lies rather in the interpolated descriptions of character, such as that inimitable one of Donna Inez, who

> Made the cleverest people quite ashamed,
> And even the good with inward envy groaned,
> Finding themselves so very much exceeded
> In their own way by all the things which she did;

* 'Whistlecraft' was the *nom-de-plume* under which John Hookham Frere published his humorous poem of *The Monks and Giants* (1817-18).

and, as we have already said, in the comments and reflections which so frequently interrupt the main thread of the tale. These drop from Byron's pen as easily as the diamonds from the mouth of the young princess in the fairy-tale. Every page is full of them; in the first canto alone there are dozens upon dozens of such gems. Now they are in the form of a diverting bit of egotism, as:

> I loathe that low vice—curiosity;
> But if there's anything in which I shine,
> 'Tis in arranging all my friends' affairs,
> Not having, of my own, domestic cares.

Now it is in the way of a piece of moral reflection, as:

> No doubt this patience, when the world is damning us,
> Is philosophic in our former friends;
> 'Tis also pleasant to be deemed magnanimous,
> The more so in obtaining our own ends. . . .
> Revenge in person's certainly no virtue,
> But, then, 'tis not my fault if *others* hurt you.

And again:

> A quiet conscience makes us so serene!
> Christians have burnt each other, quite persuaded
> That all the apostles would have done as they did.

Some of these little observations are marvellously pithy, *e.g.*

> No one likes to be disturbed at meals
> Or love;

again:

> 'Tis pity, though, in this sublime world, that
> Pleasure's a sin, and sometimes sin's a pleasure;

and again:

> There's nought, no doubt, so much the spirit calms
> As rum and true religion.

Other passages, however, are not the less effective for being more elaborate. For example:

There's doubtless something in domestic doings
Which forms, in fact, true love's antithesis;
Romances paint at full length people's wooings,
But only give a bust of marriages;
For no one cares for matrimonial cooings,
There's nothing wrong in a connubial kiss;
Think you, if Laura had been Petrarch's wife,
He would have written sonnets all his life?

All tragedies are finished by a death,
All comedies are ended with a marriage;
The future states of both are left to faith,
For authors fear description might disparage
The worlds to come of both, or fall beneath,
And then both worlds would punish their miscarriage;
So leaving each their priest and prayer-book ready,
They say no more of Death or of the Lady.

The fact is, Byron was so true a wit, that, whether he accumulates or whether he refines, he is sure to be amusing; and brief or protracted his reflections, they are equally entertaining and rememberable.

We should be disposed to say that, after *Don Juan*, *The Vision of Judgment* was Byron's most successful effort in the way of witty verse. The tone of it is rather more severe than that of the more important work, yet it belongs on the whole to the same school. The form of verse is identical, and the turns of style and thought are just the same. How particularly Byronic is the final touch!—

All I saw farther, in the last confusion,
Was, that King George slipped into heaven for one,
And when the tumult dwindled to a calm,
I left him practising the hundredth psalm.

For the matter of that, how characteristic are the opening verses!—

St. Peter sat by the celestial gate;
His keys were rusty and the lock was dull,

So little trouble had been given of late;
  Not that the place by any means was full,
But since the Gallic era 'eighty-eight,'
  The devils had ta'en a longer, stronger pull,
And 'a pull altogether,' as they say
At sea—which drew most souls another way.

The angels all were singing out of tune,
  And hoarse with having little else to do,
Excepting to wind up the sun and moon,
  Or curb a runaway young star or two,
Or wild colt of a comet, which too soon
  Broke out of bounds o'er the ethereal blue,
Splitting some planet with its playful tale,
As boats are sometimes by a wanton whale.

The guardian seraphs had retired on high,
  Finding their charges past all care below;
Terrestrial business filled nought in the sky,
  Save the recording angel's black bureau;
Who found, indeed, the facts to multiply
  With such rapidity of vice and woe,
That he had stripped off both his wings in quills,
And yet was in arrear of human ills.

Later on we have the masterly description of the Proteus, 'Junius,' with a final apotheosis of the poet Southey, which is in the very highest style of the satiric art. Of *Beppo* one cannot say so much. It is merely a brief tentative study in the school of burlesque verse, noticeable chiefly as the precursor of the admirable *Don Juan*.

We now come to Byron's more conventional satiric efforts, by which we mean the *English Bards*, the *Hints from Horace*, *The Waltz*, *The Blues*, &c. These, as we have said, are imitations of the style of Pope, and by no means worthy of that master, though containing isolated lines and passages of peculiar pungency. Byron himself liked the *Hints from Horace* best; but that was the predilection of a writer looking at his own productions with what Mr. Frederick Locker properly calls 'asinine paternal eyes.' They are all

more or less vigorous, these youthful satires; but the *English Bards*, which was the first in point of time, is also the ablest in point of conception and of execution. Almost all its judgments have been set aside; yet even now we can heartily appreciate the attacks on most of the poets and reviewers of his day,—on Scott, 'Apollo's venal son;' on Southey, 'the ballad-monger:'

> To him let Camoens, Milton, Tasso yield,
> Whose annual strains, like armies, take the field;

on

> Simple Wordsworth, framer of a lay
> As soft as evening in his favourite May, . . .
> Who both by precept and example shows
> That prose is verse, and verse is merely prose;

on 'gentle Coleridge,'

> To turgid ode and tumid stanza dear. . . .
> The bard who soars to elegize an ass;

on Moore,

> The young Catullus of his day,
> As sweet, but as immoral, in his lay;

on Jeffrey:

> Once in name
> England could boast a judge almost the same;
> In soul so like, so merciful, yet just,
> Some think that Satan has resigned his trust,
> And given the spirit to the world again,
> To sentence letters, as he sentenced men;—

and last, but not least, on

> Classic Hallam, much renowned for Greek.

These are judgments which, despite their general injustice, may be expected to stick to the subjects for many years to come, and will always go far to make the *English Bards* a satiric classic.

Byron was not cut out by nature for an epigrammatist, in the strict sense of the term; he was too fond of rambling,

too little inclined to concentration of his ideas and his style. Still, he turned out a few *jeux de mot* of surprising cleverness. His best effort in this way, perhaps, was his epigram on Lord Carlisle, who published a small pamphlet just at the time that he gave a large subscription for a public purpose. Byron wrote:

> Carlisle subscribes a thousand pounds
> Out of his rich domains;
> And for a sixpence circles round
> The produce of his brains:
> 'Tis thus the difference you may hit
> Between his fortune and his wit.

The poet was very hard, too, upon Lord Castlereagh, whose suicide drew from him the lines:

> So *He* has cut his throat at last! He? Who?
> The man who cut his country's long ago.

For William Pitt he wrote the following epitaph, meaning by 'chapel' the House of Parliament, and by 'abbey,' Westminster:

> With death doom'd to grapple,
> Beneath this cold slab he
> Who lied in the chapel
> Now lies in the abbey.

So, again, he wrote of Cobbett:

> In digging up your bones, Tom Paine,
> Will Cobbett has done well;
> You'll visit him on earth again,
> He'll visit you in hell.

Lastly, take one of his several epigrams on his marriage. He wrote the following on his wedding-day anniversary, January 2d, 1820:

> Here's a happy new year! but with reason
> I beg you'll permit me to say—
> Wish me *many* returns of the *season*,
> But as *few* as you please of the *day*.

Others might be quoted, but these give a very fair idea of Byron's productions in this vein.

Moore, who comes next to Byron in point of witty and humorous ability, does not exhibit the latter's variety of genius.* He was essentially a social *persifleur*, and that is all. A *Don Juan* was beyond him. Even his *Twopenny Post-Bag* and *Fudge Family in Paris* are mere collections of disjointed efforts. Moore could not have written an *English Bards* or *Hints from Horace*. On the other hand, in one particular direction, Moore surpasses even Byron. Admirable as are Byron's sarcasm and satire, his work has never exactly the same sparkle and vivacity as Moore's. The latter had at once a lighter and a brighter touch than the former. Byron's cynicism was to a certain extent assumed, and there is a dubious ring in some of his most pointed epigrams. Moore, on the other hand, was what he represented himself to be in song,—a social bee, gathering honey as he went, and leaving an occasional sting behind him. It is this, no doubt, which imparts to his productions their characteristic airiness and grace. Of humour Moore had, strictly speaking, little or none; in wit, pure and simple, he probably outshone every one of his contemporaries. What, for example, could be happier than the following lines—part of a short rhyming epistle supposed to be written by 'the Hon. Henry ——' to 'the Lady Emma ——'?

But to come to the point—though you think, I daresay,
It is debt or the cholera drives me away,
'Pon honour you're wrong;—such a mere bagatelle
As a pestilence nobody nowadays fears;
And the fact is, my love, I'm thus bolting, pell-mell,
To get out of the way of these horrid new peers;
This deluge of coronets, frightful to think of,
Which England is now, for her sins, at the brink of;
This coinage of *nobles*—coin'd, all of them, badly,
And sure to bring Counts to a *dis*count so sadly.

* Thomas Moore, born 1719, died 1852. *The Twopenny Post-Bag* appeared in 1811; *The Fudge Family in Paris* in 1818.

Only think—to have lords overrunning the nation,
As plenty as frogs in a Dutch inundation;
No shelter from Barons, from Earls no protection,
And tadpole young Lords, too, in every direction,—
Things created in haste, just to make a court list of,
Two legs and a coronet all they consist of!
The prospect's quite frightful, and what Sir George Rose
(My particular friend) says is perfectly true,
That, so dire the alternative, nobody knows
'Twixt the Peers and the Pestilence what he's to do;
And Sir George even doubts—could he choose his disorder—
'Twixt coffin and coronet, *which* he would order.

To understand and appreciate this, it is hardly necessary to know that just about the time it was written (1832) a new creation of peers was generally expected. Unfortunately it is otherwise with too many of Moore's most successful pieces. They were above all things *pièces d'occasion;* and if they are to be quite comprehended and enjoyed by readers nowadays, they must be very largely annotated. This is, indeed, the drawback to Moore's best satiric work ever being so popular as, intrinsically, it deserves to be—that he was so particularly a drawing-room wit, and drew his inspiration from such ephemeral sources. He is likely to live, we think, more as a lyrist and an epigrammatist than as the author of the two satirical efforts we have named above. The great majority of his witty trifles are perfectly intelligible as they stand, and are calculated, we believe, to last as long as anything in English literature.

We may quote a few of them. Here is an example of his political squibs,—directed, in this instance, against the Ministry headed by Lord Liverpool from 1812 to 1825, and addressed to Wellington:

So gently in peace Alcibiades smiled,
While in battle he shone forth so terribly grand,
That the emblem they graved on his seal was a child,
With a thunderbolt placed in its innocent hand.

O, Wellington! long as such Ministers wield
Your magnificent arm, the same emblem will do;

For while they're in Council and you in the field,
We've the babies in them and the thunder in you!

Everybody remembers the famous lines on Castlereagh:

Why is a pump like Viscount Castlereagh?
—Because it is a slender thing of wood,
That up and down its awkward arm doth sway,
And coolly spout, and spout, and spout away
In one weak, washy, everlasting flood!

Here, again, is a savage attack on one Colonel Macmahon of the time:

What news to-day?—'O, worse and worse—
Mac is the Prince's Privy Purse!'—
The Prince's Purse! No, no, you fool—
You mean the Prince's *Ridicule*.

Exceedingly witty, too, are his lines on Lord Jeffrey, who began by abusing Wordsworth, Keats, and others, and ended by declaring that their works were already 'melting fast from the field of our vision' (1844):

What thanks do we owe, what respects and regards,
To Jeffrey, the old nursery-maid of us bards,—
Who, resolved to the last his vocation to keep,
First whipped us all round and now puts us to sleep!

Most persons, again, remember the couplet on a squinting poetess—a piece of wit so good that, like Keats's 'thing of beauty,' so far from staling, 'its loveliness increases—it will never fade into nothingness:'

To no one Muse does she her glance confine,
But has an eye, at once, to all the Nine!

This is, perhaps, one of the very best epigrams in the language.

Of Moore's miscellaneous satiric verse the following may be cited, at once for its own merits and as a good instance of the poetry of 'surprise' already met with by us in our sketch of English wit and humour:

I could resign that eye of blue,
  Howe'er its splendour used to thrill me;
And e'en that cheek of roseate hue—
  To lose it, Chloe, scarce would kill me.

That snowy neck I ne'er should miss,
  However much I raved about it;
And sweetly as that lip can kiss,
  I think I could exist without it.

In short, so well I've learned to fast,
  That, sooth, my love, I know not whether
I might not bring myself at last
  To do without you altogether.

Somehow or other, the mention of Moore and his political *jeux d'esprit* reminds one irresistibly of the great collection of *jeux d'esprit* of his time—perhaps the most important, politically and otherwise, ever put together—namely, the *Anti-Jacobin Review*. This was a medley of prose and verse, published monthly between 1798 and 1821, and written by a small knot of politicians of whom Canning, Hookham Frere, and Gifford were the chief. Politically its tendency was identical with Moore's satirical productions; in style it bears—so far as the poetical portions are concerned—but slight resemblance to those works. Clever as they were, Canning, Frere, and Gifford had neither the lightness nor the brightness of the author of the *Twopenny Post-Bag*. They were more in earnest in their satire, and, moreover, dealt more in parody and in burlesque than Moore did. Their fun was more elaborate than his, more laboured, and not, one would suppose, so happily effective. Yet, in its day, the *Anti-Jacobin* was unquestionably a power, both on account of its intrinsic merits and the men who were known to be at work upon it. We have to do here only with its verse, which was collected into a single volume in 1801. Portions of it are familiar to the public. Everybody, for example, has read or heard of 'The Needy Knife-Grinder,' though they may not have been aware that it was written in parody of Southey's 'Sapphics,' and is a satire on

the pseudo-philanthropy of the day. The reader may even have quoted the inevitable

Story? God bless you! I have none to tell, sir!

or the equally inevitable

I give thee sixpence! I will see thee damned first!

without having any very clear idea of its origin. Equally familiar is the song from the *Rovers*—a burlesque of the German school of drama—also written by Canning. Everybody has heard, too, of the *Loves of the Triangles*—a parody on Darwin's *Loves of the Plants*, though in this case the familiarity, we suspect, hardly extends beyond the title. This 'poem' opens as follows:

Stay your rude steps, or e'er your feet invade
The Muses' haunts, ye sons of War and Trade!
Nor you, ye legion fiends of Church and Law,
Pollute these pages with unhallow'd paw!
Debased, corrupting, grovelling, and confined,
No Definitions touch *your* senseless mind;
To you no Postulates prefer their claim,
No ardent Axioms *your* dull souls inflame;
For *you* no Tangents touch, no Angles meet,
No Circles join in osculation sweet!

For *me*, ye Cissoids, round my temple bend
Your wandering Curves; ye Conchoids extend;
Let playful Pendules quick vibration feel,
While silent Cyclois rests upon her wheel;
Let Hydrostatics, simpering as they go,
Lead the light Naiads on fantastic toe;
Let shrill Acoustics tune the tiny lyre;
With Euclid sage fair Algebra conspire;
The obedient pulley strong Mechanics ply,
And wanton Optics roll the melting eye! . . .

But chief, thou Nurse of the Didactic Muse,
Divine Nonsensia, all thy sense infuse;
The charms of Secants and of Tangents tell,
How Loves and Graces in an Angle dwell;

How slow progressive Points protract the Line,
As pendant spiders spin the filmy twine;
How lengthened Lines, impetuous sweeping round,
Spread the wide Plane, and mark its circling bound;
How Planes, their substance with their motion grown,
Form the huge Cube, the Cylinder, the Cone.

In a similary mock-heroic vein is the *Progress of Man*, a pretended 'didactic poem,' in which the sublimest commonplaces are expressed with a great affectation of profundity:

First, to each living thing, whate'er its kind,
Some lot, some part, some station is assign'd.
The feather'd race with pinions skim the air—
Not so the mackerel, and still less the bear:
This roams the wood, carniv'rous, for his prey;
That, with soft roe, pursues his watery way:
This, slain by hunters, yields his shaggy hide;
This, caught by fishers, is on Sunday cried.

But each, contented with his humble sphere,
Moves unambitious through the circling year:
Nor e'er forgets the fortune of his race,
Nor pines to quit, or strives to change, his place.
Ah! who has seen the mailèd lobster rise,
Clap her broad wings, and, soaring, claim the skies?
When did the owl, descending from her bower,
Crop, 'midst the fleecy flocks, the tender flower;
Or the young heifer plunge, with pliant limb,
In the salt-wave, and fish-like strive to swim?

The same with plants—potatoes 'tatoes breed,
The costly cabbage springs from cabbage-seed;
Lettuce to lettuce, leeks to leeks, succeed;
Nor e'er did cooling cucumbers presume
To flower like myrtle, or like violets bloom.

Much of the *Anti-Jacobin*, it must be confessed, is as unintelligible, without annotation, as are some of Moore's productions; yet even when allowance has been made for this, it still includes much which is even now, and will always be, in a very high degree enjoyable.

Hardly less famous than the *Anti-Jacobin*, and considerably more familiar to modern readers, is the book of *Rejected Addresses*, published by James and Horace Smith in 1812—about fourteen years after the *Anti-Jacobin* was started.* Invitations had been given to the authors of the period to contribute an address to be read at the opening of Drury Lane Theatre, and in *Rejected Addresses* the brothers Smith professed to supply the contributions which had been declared 'not suitable.' The idea of thus parodying the style of the leading poets of the day was a most happy one, and was carried out—as everybody knows—in a perfectly admirable manner. It is, indeed, difficult to say which of the travesties is most excellent, though the palm may, perhaps, be justifiably awarded to the burlesques of Wordsworth, Scott, and Crabbe. Most people know, almost by heart, the first of these three efforts—'The Baby's Début'—with its exquisitely comical conclusion:

> And now, good gentlefolks, I go
> To join Mamma, and see the show;
> So, bidding you adieu,
> I curtsy, like a pretty miss,
> And if you'll blow to me a kiss,
> I'll blow a kiss to you.
>
> [*Blows a kiss, and exit.*

Equally familiar is the 'Tale of Drury Lane'—the second of the three—with its no less inimitable finale:

> What are they feared on? fools—'od rot 'em!—
> Were the last words of Higginbottom.

But even more admirable in its way is the Crabbe travestie, especially in these lines:

> John Richard William Alexander Dwyer
> Was footman to Justinian Stubbs, Esquire;
> But when John Dwyer 'listed in the Blues,
> Emmanuel Jennings polished Stubbs's shoes.

* James Smith, born 1775, died 1839; Horace Smith, born 1779, died 1849.

Emmanuel Jennings brought his youngest boy
Up as a corn-cutter—a safe employ;
In Holywell Street, St. Pancras, he was bred—
At number twenty-seven, it is said—
Facing the pump, and near the Granby's head.
He would have bound him to some shop in town,
But with a premium he could not come down;
Pat was the urchin's name, a red-haired youth,
Fonder of purl and skittle-grounds than truth.

Of the others the best, perhaps, is the parody on Moore, which opens in the true Anacreontic style:

Let artists decide on the beauties of Drury,
The richest to me is when woman is there;
The question of houses I leave to the jury;
The fairest to me is the house of the fair.

When woman's soft smile all our senses bewilders,
And gilds while it carves her dear form on the heart,
What need has new Drury of carvers and gilders,
With Nature so bounteous, why call on art?

Outside of the *Rejected Addresses*, Horace Smith is best known as a novelist, though it must not be forgotten that he was the author of an 'Address to a Mummy,' which figures in most miscellanies of wit and humour. James Smith was considerably more prolific than his brother in the way of verse; his *Horace in London*, published in 1813, and the Miscellanies published with his biography in 1840, representing about as much as the *Rejected Addresses* put together. The modernised *Horace* has a certain smartness and vivacity of its own, and is worthy at any rate of more attention than it generally receives; it has little, however, of first-rate or of permanent interest. It is very fair *vers de société*, and no more. Here, for example, is Smith's version of the 'Persicos Odi:'

Here, waiter, I'll dine in this box:
I've looked at your long bill of fare:
A Pythagorean it shocks
To view all the rarities there.

I'm not overburden'd with cash,
Roast beef is the dinner for me;
Then why should I eat *calipash*,
Or why should I eat *calipee?*

Your trifle's no trifle, I ween,
To customers prudent as I am;
Your peas in December are green,
But I'm not so green as to buy 'em.

With ven'son I seldom am fed—
Go, bring me a sirloin, you ninny;
Who dines at a guinea a head
Will ne'er by his head get a guinea.

The last two lines are good, but how *bourgeois* is the effort in its tone compared with that by Thackeray, which we give elsewhere! The Miscellanies, on the whole, are more successful, comprising, as they do, a number of the best epigrams and *jeux d'esprit* of which Smith was the author. These, it is true, depend in many cases for their point upon the puns, at which Smith was an adept; but they are exceedingly clever, nevertheless; exceedingly amusing, and not without a certain amount of cleverness. For example:

Beneath a piazza two wags chanced to pass,
Where a shop was adorned by an acre of glass.
Quoth Tom, *sotto voce*, 'Hail, Burnett and Co!
Success nowadays is dependent on show.'
'Not so,' answered Richard, 'here industry reigns;
Success is dependent on using great *panes*.'

Again:

As late the Trades' Unions, by way of a show,
Over Westminster Bridge strutted five in a row,
'I feel for the bridge,' whisper'd Dick, with a shiver;
'Thus tried by the mob, it may sink in the river.'
Quoth Tom, a Crown lawyer, 'Abandon your fears;
As a bridge, it can only be tried by its *piers*.'

It would be unfair to suppose, however, that Smith could do nothing but pun. There is real neatness in the epigram which he wrote upon a certain Mr. Strahan, and which

brought him from that gentleman the handsome legacy of three hundred pounds:

Your lower limbs seemed far from stout
When last I saw you walk;
The cause I presently found out
When you began to talk.
The power that props the body's length,
In due proportion spread,
In you mounts upwards, and the strength
All settles in the head.

This is a very fair specimen of true complimentary wit.

Smith, in his way, was quite a man of fashion, but hardly in the sense in which Hook—the famous Theodore—was.* Smith lived 'among' the people of *haut ton*, but Hook was 'of them.' He was emphatically a man about town, his talents as a mimic and a *farceur* generally throwing open to him the doors of the most exclusive houses. His connection with *John Bull* was also most important to him; there was, in fact, no more powerful journalist of the day than the author of *Jack Brag* and *Sayings and Doings*. The great mass of his verse, which was chiefly political, appeared in, and died along with, the successive numbers of his notorious journal. Some of it, however, has been rescued, and is still occasionally to be met with, though in this case, too, the allusions—at one time so obvious—now require to be constantly elucidated. As a specimen of Hook's verse at its best—by which we mean its most amusing and intelligible character—we take a stanza or two from his rhymes on 'London Clubs'—choosing those which, from their permanent nature, can still be enjoyed even at this distance of time from publication. Running over the names of all the fashionable club-houses of his time, Hook begins:

There's first the Athenæum Club; so wise, there's not a man of it
That has not sense enough for six—in fact, that is the plan of it.

* Born 1788, died 1841.

The very waiters answer you with eloquence Socratical,
And always place the knives and forks in order mathematical.

Then opposite the mental club you'll find the *regi*mental one—
A meeting made of men of war, and yet a very gentle one.
If uniform good living please your palate, here's excess of it,
Especially at private dinners, when they make a 'mess' of it.

The Travellers are in Pall Mall, and smoke cigars so cosily,
And dream they climb the highest Alps, or rove the plains of Moselai.
The world for them has nothing new, they have explored all parts of it,
And now they are club-footed, and they sit and look at charts of it.

The Orientals, homeward bound, now seek their club much sallower,
And while they eat green fat they find their own fat growing yellower.
The soup is made more savoury, till bile to shadows dwindles 'em,
And neither Moore nor Savory with seidlitz draughts rekindles 'em.

Then there are clubs where persons parliamentary preponderate,
And clubs for men upon the Turf (I wonder they arn't under it);
Clubs where the winning ways of sharper folks pervert the use of clubs,
Where knaves will make subscribers cry, 'Egad! this is the deuce of clubs!'

Side by side with Hook we may place the Captain Morris whose verses on the comparative charms of town and country have figured in many a collection.* There can be no question that 'The Contrast' is the Captain's most

* Born 1740, died 1832.

successful effort. His volumes of *Lyra Urbanica* contain nothing in any way comparable to it for ease and freshness. There are plenty of bacchanalian ditties—for Morris was emphatically the laureate of the banquet-table—and there are occasional lyrics of a pure *vers-de-société* order; but those to whom 'The Contrast,' and not the remainder of his works, is known, will be somewhat disappointed with the major part of Morris's productions. On the whole, at the risk of putting forward 'caul kail made het again,' we are disposed to quote from 'The Contrast' rather than from anything else written by this genial and voluble *bon vivant*. There is genuine humour in these verses:

In town, if it rain, why it damps not our hope—
The eye has her choice and the fancy her scope;
What harm though it pour whole nights or whole days?
It spoils not our prospects, or stops not our ways.

In the country what bliss, when it rains in the fields,
To live on the transports that shuttlecock yields;
Or go crawling from window to window, to see
A pig on a dunghill, or crow on a tree. . . .

In London how easy we visit and meet!
Gay pleasure's the theme, and sweet smiles are our treat.
Our morning's a round of good-humour'd delight,
And we rattle, in comfort, to pleasure at night.

In the country, how sprightly! our visits we make
Through ten miles of mud, for formality's sake;
With the coachman in drink, and the moon in a fog,
And no thought in our head but a ditch or a bog.

In town we've no use for the skies overhead,
For when the sun rises then we go to bed;
And as to that old-fashioned virgin, the moon,
She shines out of season, like satin in June. . . .

'Tis in the country alone we can find
That happy resource, that relief of the mind,
When, drove to despair, our last efforts we make,
And drag the old fish-pond, for novelty's sake.

Indeed I must own 'tis a pleasure complete
To see ladies well draggled and wet in their feet;
But what is that all to the transport we feel
When we capture, in triumph, two toads and an eel?

In the Muse of Henry Luttrell* we have something very different from that of Captain Morris. The essence of the one is geniality, the essence of the other wit and elegance. Whilst Morris was devoted to the wine-bowl, Luttrell thought more of the delicacies of the platter; and it is not fanciful to say that the distinction in their tastes is plainly discernible in their writings. Luttrell's chief performance was a series of four *Letters to Julia*, written in easy-going octosyllabic verse—verse, however, which, with all its ease, is never slipshod. The air of 'society' can be detected in the happy turns of expression, and in the refinement which presides over the whole tone of thought and style. The wit is that of an exquisite of the purest water; it is not obtrusive, it is in no sense conscious, but ripples to the surface, when it comes to it at all, with charming naturalness. The *Letters* profess to have to do with the affection of a certain Charles for a certain Julia, who delays his suit, and who is gently reprimanded therefor by the individual who is supposed to write the *Letters*. This thread of narrative, however, is but a mere excuse for stringing together a number of sketches of, and reflections on, the social habits of the day. Here, for example, is a passage in which the author—who, though a man of fashion, was no dandy—gently satirises the beau of the period:

'Have you, my friend,' I've heard him say,
'Been lucky in your turns to-day?—
Think not that what I ask alludes
To Fortune's stale vicissitudes.
Or that I'm driven from you to learn
How cards and dice and women turn,
And what prodigious contributions
They levy, in their revolutions.

* Born 1770, died 1851. The *Letters to Julia* appeared originally in 1820.

I ask not if in times so critical
You've managed well your turns political,
Knowing your aptitude to rat.
My question points to—your cravat.
These are the only turns I mean.
Tell me if these have lucky been?
If round your neck, in every fold
Exact, the muslin has been rolled,
And, dexterously in front confined,
Observed the proper set behind;
In short, by dint of hand and eye,
Have you achieved a perfect tie?

Should yours (kind Heaven, avert the omen!),
Like the cravats of vulgar, low men,
Asunder start—and, yawning wide,
Disclose a chasm on either side;
Or should it stubbornly persist
To take some awkward tasteless twist,
Some crease, indelible, and look
Just like a dunce's dog-eared book,
How would you parry the disgrace?
In what assembly show your face?
How brook your rival's scornful glance,
Or partner's titter in the dance?
How in the morning dare to meet
The quizzers of the park or street?
Your occupation's gone; in vain
Hope to dine out, or flirt again.
The ladies from their lists will put you,
And even *I*, my friend, must cut you!'

Here, again, is Luttrell in another vein—a vein in which the humour sometimes struggles with the wit—a vein in which the effects are somewhat broader than the writer is accustomed to attempt. It is a description of a city shower, not unworthy to rank with the more familiar one of a more famous poet:

But, O! the treachery of our weather,
When Sunday-folks are met together!

Its tempting brightness scarce matured,
How suddenly the day's obscured!
Bless me, how dark!—Thou threatening cloud,
Pity the *un-umbrella'd* crowd.
The cloud rolls onward with the breeze.
First, pattering on the distant trees
The rain-drops fall—then quicker, denser,
On many a parasol and spencer;
Soon drenching, with no mercy on it,
The straw and silk of many a bonnet.
Think of their hapless owners fretting,
While feathers, crape, and gauze are wetting!

Think of the pang to well-dressed girls,
When, pinched in vain, their hair uncurls,
And ringlets from each lovely pate
Hang mathematically straight!
As off, on every side, they scour,
Still beats the persecuting shower,
Till, on the thirsty gravel smoking,
It fairly earns the name of soaking.
Breathless they scud; some helter-skelter
To carriages, and some for shelter;
Lisping to coachmen drunk or dumb
In *numbers*—while no numbers come.*
Some in their clinging clothes so lank,
Others so bouncing, all so blank,
With sarsnets stained, with stockings splashed,
With muslins prematurely washed,
Enraged, resigned, in tears, or frowning,
Look as if just escaped from drowning;
While anxious thoughts pursue them home,
Whence their next Sunday-dress must come.

We must not forget to include Luttrell in the number of the epigrammatists. He did not write much in this direction, but what he did produce was excellent of its kind. This, on a man who was run over by an omnibus, is particularly good:

* 'I lisped in numbers.' *Pope.*

Killed by an omnibus—why not?
So quick a death a boon is:
Let not his friends lament his lot—
Mors omnibus communis.

Nor should it be forgotten that it was Luttrell that wrote the admirable distich on Miss Tree, the singer:

On this Tree when a nightingale settles and sings,
The Tree will return her as good as she brings.

It is true that Rogers wrote this on Lord Dudley:

Ward has no heart, they say; but I deny it—
He has a heart—and gets his speeches by it.

But it is equally true that Luttrell capped it by making Dudley say:

'In vain my affections the ladies are seeking;
If I give up my heart, there's an end of my speaking.'

Haynes Bayly was born twenty-six years before Luttrell, and died twelve years before him: for forty-two years he was his contemporary, and subject to very much the same social influences. Yet how different is the tone of their productions! The one is elegant and witty, the other humorous (with such wit as may be said to reside in punning), and, if the truth must be told, the least bit vulgar in his style. His poetry, in fact, is the poetry of the parvenu; he looks at Mayfair from the point of view of Pimlico. You detect the false note in his verse at once; and yet you find him none the less amusing. His best known effort is, perhaps, the 'copy of verses' on fashionable novels, in which occurs the often-quoted verse:

O Radcliffe,* thou once wert the charmer
Of girls who sat reading all night;
Thy heroes were striplings in armour,
Thy heroines damsels in white.

* Mrs. Radcliffe, author of *The Romance of the Forest*, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, &c.

But past are thy terrible touches,—
Our lips in derision we curl,
Unless we are told how a Duchess
Conversed with her cousin the Earl.

On the whole, however, we should be inclined to cite the following as one of the most characteristic examples of his *mode*. He is fond of making the match-scheming mother complain of the conduct of 'the men:'

Don't talk of September!—a lady
Must think it of all months the worst;
The men are preparing already
To take themselves off on the First.
I try to arrange a small party,
The girls dance together; how tame!
I'd get up a game of écarté,
But they go to bring down *their* game!

Last month, their attention to quicken,
A supper I knew was the thing;
But now from my turkey and chicken
They're tempted by birds on the wing!
They shoulder their terrible rifles,
(It's really too much for my nerves!)
And slighting my sweets and my trifles,
Prefer my Lord Harry's preserves!

Miss Lovemore, with great consternation,
Now hears of the terrible plan,
And fears that her little flirtation
Was only a flash in the pan!
O! marriage is hard of digestion,
And men are all sparing of words;
And now, 'stead of popping the question
They set off to pop at the birds.

Go, false ones, your aim is so horrid,
That love at the sight of you dies;
You care not for locks on the forehead,
The *locks* made by Manton you prize.

All thoughts sentimental exploding,
  Like *flints* I behold you depart;
You heed not, when priming and loading,
  The load you have left on my heart!

They talk about patent percussions,
  And all preparations for sport;
And those double-barrel discussions
  Exhaust double bottles of port!
The dearest is deaf to my summons,
  As off on his pony he jogs;
A doleful condition is woman's,—
  The men are all gone to the dogs.

So much for the men-poets of society. We may now turn for a moment to a lady-writer of society verse—Miss Catherine Fanshawe, who will be remembered by posterity if only as the author of the famous enigma on the letter H, which was for so long attributed to Byron. Her poetical pieces have been collected recently, and may be studied with advantage. One of her most happy efforts is her 'Elegy on the Abrogation of the Birth Night Ball, and the Consequent Final Subversion of the Minuet.' Thus does the 'beau of the last century' 'make his moan' in mirth-provoking mock solemnity:

No more the well-taught feet shall tread
The figure of the mazy zed;
The beau of other times shall mourn,
As gone, and never to return,
The graceful bow, the curtsy low,
The floating forms, that undulating glide
(Like anchor'd vessels on the swelling tide),
That rise and sink, alternate, as they go,
Now bent the knee, now lifted on the toe;
The side-long step that works its even way,
The slow *pas-grave* and slower balancé—
Still with fixed gaze he eyes the imagined fair,
And turns the corner with an easy air.
Not so his partner—from her tangled train
To free her captive foot, she strives in vain;

Her tangled train the struggling captive holds
(Like great Alcides) in the fatal folds;
The laws of gallantry his aid demand,
The laws of etiquette withhold his hand.
Such pains, such pleasures, now alike are o'er,
And beau and etiquette shall soon exist no more!

In their stead, behold advancing,
Modern men and women dancing!
Step and dress alike express,
Above, below, from head to toe,
Male and female awkwardness.
Without a hoop, without a ruffle,
One eternal jig and shuffle;
Where's the air, and where's the gait?
Where's the feather in the hat?
Where's the frizzed toupee? and where,
O where's the powder for the hair?
Where are all their former graces?
And where three-quarters of their faces?
With half the forehead lost and half the chin?
We know not where they end, and where begin.

Another of her best productions is her imitation of Wordsworth's style, beginning—

There is a river clear and fair,
'Tis neither broad nor narrow;
It winds a little here and there—
It winds about like any hare;
And then it takes as straight a course
As on the turnpike-road a horse,
Or through the air an arrow—

an imitation so close as to be almost outside the range of parody proper.

Apart from the professed concocters of society verse, there was at this time—as there always is—a number of clever people of fashion, who now and then turned a couplet or quatrain, or even a short lyric squib, by way of making the time pass pleasantly, or causing amusement to their

neighbours. Prominent among them was Moore's friend, Lord Holland, some of whose performances are preserved in the poet's well-known *Diary*. This, for example, upon patrons' promises, is by no means bad:

A Minister's answer is always so kind!
I starve, and he tells me he'll keep me in mind.
Half his promise, God knows, would my spirits restore:
Let him keep me, and, faith, I will ask for no more.

Good, too, is this trifle on the then poet-laureate, Southey:

Our laureate Bob defrauds the king:
He takes his cash and will not sing.
Yet on he goes, I know not why,
Singing for us who will not buy.

When, again, Lord Carlisle wrote some verses against Lady Holland's acceptance of the gift of Napoleon's snuff-box, her husband wrote:

For this her snuff-box to resign!
A pleasant thought enough.
Alas! my lord, for verse like thine
Who'd give a pinch of snuff?

Everybody, we suppose, has read the epigram on French taste:

The French have taste in all they do,
Which we are quite without;
For Nature, which to them gave *goût*,
To us gave only gout.

Everybody, however, may not be aware that it is from the pen of witty Lord Erskine—the same Lord Erskine who wrote of Sir Walter Scott's mediocre poem, *The Field of Waterloo*, as follows:

On Waterloo's ensanguined plain
Lie tens of thousands of the slain:
But none by sabre or by shot
Fell half so flat as Walter Scott.

Of Sydney Smith, who was also guilty of an occasional

jeu d'esprit, the following is a favourable specimen. It was written on the fashionable mania of the time for jewelry and gambling:

> Thoughtless that 'all that's brightest fades,'
> Unmindful of the King of Spades,
> The Sexton and his Subs;
> How foolishly we play our parts,—
> Our wives on *diamonds* set their *hearts*,
> We set our *hearts* on *clubs!*

Better, however, perhaps than this is his whimsical 'Description of Lord Jeffrey riding on a Donkey:'

> Witty as Horatius Flaccus,
> As great a Jacobin as Gracchus,
> Short, though not so fat, as Bacchus,
> Riding on a little jackass!

It is, of course, unnecessary to do more than refer to the oft-quoted 'Recipe for making Salad,' of which two lines at least have already become classical:

> Onion atoms lurk within the bowl,
> And, scarce suspected, animate the whole.

For a well-turned compliment, too, commend us to the witty cleric's lines on Professor Airey and his wife.

That other witty cleric, the Rev. R. H. Barham—otherwise Thomas Ingoldsby, of the *Ingoldsby Legends*—almost deserves a chapter to himself, so thoroughly *sui generis* is the great majority of his work. The great merit, of course, of the *Legends*, next to their volubility, is their wonderful feats of rhyming, which are certainly most original in character, and would have made a reputation for their author apart altogether from his humour, pure and simple. For it would be a great mistake to suppose that the *Legends* are only clever *tours de force:* they are that, but considerably more. It would, indeed, be easy to cull numerous extracts from them, but we pass from the *Legends* proper to quote a humorous effort of a very charming character, included, indeed, in the same volume as the *Legends*, but

not classed along with them—we mean the exquisite parody on the 'Burial of Sir John Moore,' which, happily, has not got into the comic extract-books. It is well worth giving in its entirety:

Not a sou had he got—not a guinea or note—
And he looked confoundedly flurried,
As he bolted away without paying his shot,
And the landlady after him hurried.

We saw him again at dead of night,
When home from the club returning;
We twigged the doctor beneath the light
Of the gas-lamp brilliantly burning.

All bare and exposed to the midnight dews,
Reclined in a gutter we found him;
And he looked like a gentleman taking a snooze
With his *Marshall* cloak around him.

'The doctor's as drunk as the devil,' we said,
And we managed a shutter to borrow;
We raised him, and sighed at the thought that his head
Would consumedly ache on the morrow.

We bore him home, and we put him to bed,
And we told his wife and his daughter
To give him next morning a couple of red-
Herrings, with soda-water.

Loudly they talked of his money that's gone,
And his lady began to upbraid him;
But little he recked, so they let him snore on
'Neath the counterpane, just as we laid him.

We tucked him in, and had hardly done,
When, beneath the window calling,
We heard the rough voice of a son of a gun
Of a watchman 'One o'clock!' bawling.

Slowly and sadly we all walked down
From his room on the uppermost story;
A rushlight we placed on the cold hearth-stone,
And we left him alone in his glory.

To whom, again, is not the 'Pier at Margate' as familiar as the 'Jackdaw of Rheims' and all its glorious company? There is other verse of Barham's, of an 'occasional' sort, not quite so hackneyed, and specimens of it may be read in Mr. Locker's *Lyra Elegantiarum*, and other places.

Heber's best-known verses—for we fear it must be confessed they are more often read than *Palestine* itself—are those entitled 'Sympathy,' which relate how a knight and a lady, having lost their respective loved ones, go to a brook-side with the intention of drowning their sorrows in the stream, but end by linking hearts and arms together:

> At length spoke the lass, 'twixt a smile and a tear,
> 'The weather is cold for a watery bier;
> When summer returns we may easily die,—
> Till then let us sorrow in company.'

Like many another highly-respected divine, and even bishop, Heber in his college days could turn a squib with the best of them; and when a certain Dean of Brasenose, nicknamed 'Dr. Toe,' was jilted by his sweetheart, who ran off with a footman, Heber wrote:

> 'Twixt Footman Tom and Dr. Toe
> A rivalship befell,
> Which should become the fav'rite beau,
> And bear away the belle.
>
> The footman won the lady's heart;
> And who can wonder? No man:
> The whole prevail'd against the part,
> 'Twas Foot-man versus Toe-man.

It is only natural that among the comic dramatists of Byron's day we should find men producing verse of a witty and a humorous order. Especially may we look for it in Sheridan, who not only scattered some very lively songs throughout his comedies and farces, but composed a comic opera—the *Duenna*—which is full of sprightly lyrics. Here is one of the latter:

If a daughter you have, she's the plague of your life,
No peace shall you know, though you've buried your wife!
At twenty she mocks at the duty you taught her—
O, what a plague is an obstinate daughter!
Sighing and whining,
Dying and pining,
O, what a plague is an obstinate daughter!

When scarce in their teens, they have wit to perplex us,
With letters and lovers for ever they vex us;
While each still rejects the fair suitor you've brought her;
O, what a plague is an obstinate daughter!
Wrangling and jangling,
Flouting and pouting,
O, what a plague is an obstinate daughter!

Let me also give the following from *The School for Scandal*, hackneyed though it be to theatre-goers:

Here's to the maiden of bashful fifteen;
Here's to the widow of fifty;
Here's to the flaunting extravagant quean,
And here's to the housewife that's thrifty.
Let the toast pass,
Drink to the lass,
I'll warrant she'll prove an excuse for the glass.

Here's to the charmer whose dimples we prize,
Now to the maid who has none, sir;
Here's to the girl with a pair of blue eyes,
And here's to the nymph with but one, sir.
Let the toast pass, &c.

Here's to the maid with a bosom of snow;
Now to her that's as brown as a berry;
Here's to the wife with a face full of woe,
And now to the damsel that's merry.
Let the toast pass, &c.

For let 'em be clumsy, or let 'em be slim,
Young or ancient, I care not a feather;
So fill a pint bumper quite up to the brim,

So fill up your glasses, nay, fill to the brim,
And let us e'en toast them together.
Let the toast pass, &c.

Sheridan does not seem to have done much in the epigrammatic line, or, at any rate, not much of it survives. One of the best trifles that have come down to us from his pen is that which he wrote on impecunious Fox:

'I would,' says Fox, 'a tax devise
That shall not fall on me.'
'Then tax receipts,' Lord North replies;
'For those you never see.'

And this was the less graceful upon Sheridan's part that he was quite as unaccustomed to see receipts as Fox was. The following repartee in verse is very clever:

Lord Erskine, at women presuming to rail,
Calls a wife 'a tin-canister tied to one's tail;'
And poor Lady Anne, while the subject he carries on,
Seems hurt at his lordship's degrading comparison.

Yet wherefore degrading? Considered aright,
A canister's useful, and polished and bright;
And should dirt its original purity hide,
That's the fault of the puppy to whom it is tied.

Colman the Younger is to be remembered—not only as the author of some of the most popular comedies of his day, such as *The Heir at Law*, *The Poor Gentleman*, *John Bull*, and others — but as the inventor (one may almost call him) of the short humorous tale in verse—the tale which is not only humorous in treatment, but humorous in subject also. Of these he wrote a legion; all of them so popular that one despairs of reproducing anything that is not trite. Perhaps one could not choose anything more suitable for the present purpose than the diverting history of 'The Fat Single Gentleman:'

Who has e'er been in London, that overgrown place,
Has seen 'Lodgings to Let' stare him full in the face;
Some are good and let dearly, while others ('tis known)
Are so dear and so bad they are best let alone.

Will Waddle, whose temper was studious and lonely,
Hired lodgings that took single gentlemen only;
But Will was so fat he appeared like a tun,
Or like two single gentlemen rolled into one.

Will entered his rooms, and to bed he retreated,
But all the night long he felt fevered and heated;
Though heavy to weigh as a score of fat sheep,
He wasn't by any means heavy to sleep.

Next night was the same, and the next, and the next;
He perspired like an ox, he was nervous and vext.
Week passed after week, till, by weekly succession,
His weakly condition was past all expression.

In six months his acquaintance began much to doubt him,
His skin like a lady's loose gown hung about him;
So he sent for a doctor and cried, like a ninny,
'I've lost many pounds—make me well; here's a guinea.'

The doctor looked wise. 'A slow fever,' he said;
And prescribed sudorifics on going to bed.
'Sudorifics in bed,' exclaimed Will, 'are humbugs;
I've enough of them here without paying for drugs.'

Will kicked out the doctor, but—when ill indeed—
E'en dismissing a doctor don't always succeed;
So he sent for his host and said, 'Sir, do you know
I'm that fat single gentleman six months ago!

'Look ye, landlord, I think,' argued Will with a grin,
'That with honest intentions you first took me in;
But since the first night, though to say it seems bold,
I've been so plaguey hot that I'm sure I've caught cold.'

Quoth the landlord, 'Till now I ne'er had a dispute;
I've let lodgings ten years—I'm a baker to boot.
As for airing your sheets, sir, my wife is no sloven;
And your bed is immediately over my oven.'

'Your oven!' cries Will. Says the host, in a passion,
'In that excellent bed died three people of fashion.
Why so crusty, good sir!' 'Zounds!' cries Will in a taking,
'Who wouldn't be crusty with half a year's baking?'

Will paid for his room. Said mine host, with a sneer,
'Well, I see you've been going away this half year.'
'Although we must part, yet no quarrel,' Will said,
'But I'd rather not perish while you make your bread!'

We have given this in full because to 'cut and carve' it would be to destroy it utterly. We turn now to the sentimental and passionate singers of the days of Byron, who nevertheless had, or thought they had, a vein of humour, and composed in a certain style accordingly.

Shelley was one of those who thought he had a vein of humour, and we have 'Peter Bell the Third' as the result of that unfortunate conviction. Rogers really had a vein of satire, and how successfully he worked it may be judged from the specimen of the ore already given.* Southey also must be credited with a sort of elephantine playfulness, suitable to him who sang of Madoc and of Joan of Arc in epics five miles long. There is a very fair specimen of his manner in the lines in which 'the poet relates how he stole a lock of Delia's hair:'

She heard the scissors that fair lock divide;
And whilst my heart with transport panted big,
She cast a fairy frown on me, and cried,
'You stupid puppy, you have spoiled my wig!'

There is another in his pseudo-serious sonnet 'To a Goose:'

If thou didst feed on western plains of yore,
Or waddle wide with flat and flabby feet
Over some Cambrian mountain's plashy moor;
Or find in farmer's yard a safe retreat
From gipsy thieves, and foxes sly and fleet;
If thy great quills, by lawyer guided, trace
Deeds big with ruin to some wretched race,
Or love-sick poet's sonnet, sad and sweet,
Wailing the rigour of his lady fair;
Or if, the drudge of housemaid's daily toil,
Cobwebs and dust thy pinions white besoil;—
Departed goose! I neither know or care.

* See ante, p. 205.

But this I know, that we pronounced thee fine,
Seasoned with sage and onions, and port wine.

One's estimate of Southey's humour would be considerably modified, no doubt, if one could be sure that he was the author of the verses on 'The Devil's Thoughts,' which figure in some editions of his works, just as they find a place in some editions of the works of Coleridge. Unfortunately the mystery of the authorship does not end here, for Porson has also been named frequently in connection with it. What, however, is perfectly clear, is that the verses, by whomsoever written, are particularly clever. *Par exemple:*

From his brimstone bed at break of day
A-walking the Devil is gone,
To visit his snug little farm the Earth,
And see how his stock goes on.

Over the hill and over the dale,
And he went over the plain,
And backward and forward he switched his long tail,
As a gentleman switches his cane.

And how then was the Devil drest?
O! he was in his Sunday's best;
His jacket was red and his breeches were blue,
And there was a hole where the tail came through.

He saw a lawyer killing a viper
On a dunghill hard by his own stable;
And the Devil smiled, for it put him in mind
Of Cain and his brother Abel.

He saw an apothecary on a white horse
Ride by on his own vocations;
And the Devil thought of his old friend
Death in the Revelations.

He saw a cottage with a double coach-house,
A cottage of gentility;
And the Devil did grin, for his darling sin
Is the pride that apes humility.

As he went through Cold-Bath Fields he saw
A solitary cell;
And the Devil was pleased, for it gave him a hint
For improving his prisons in hell.

General Gascoigne's burning face
He saw with consternation,
And back to hell his way did he take,
For the Devil thought by a slight mistake
It was a general conflagration.

There is the less reason to be particular about the authorship of 'The Devil's Thoughts' that the real author of it—whoever he may have been—was unmistakedly indebted for the idea of the poem to an old piece of verse entitled 'The Devil's Progress on Earth, or Huggle-Duggle.' This is so curious that we give it in full:

Friar Bacon walks again,
And Doctor Faustus too;
Proserpine and Pluto,
And many a goblin crew.
With that, a merry Devil
To make the airing vowed;
Huggle-Duggle, Ha! ha! ha!
The Devil laughed aloud.

Why think you that he laughed?
For sooth he came from court;
And there amongst the gallants
Had spied such pretty sport;
There was such cunning juggling,
And ladies gone so proud;
Huggle-Duggle, Ha! ha! ha!
The Devil laughed aloud.

With that, into the City
Away the Devil went;
To view the merchants' dealings
It was his full intent.

And there along the brave Exchange
He crept into the crowd.
Huggle-Duggle, Ha! ha! ha!
The Devil laughed aloud.

He went into the City
To see all there was well;
Their scales were false, their weights were light,
Their conscience fit for hell;
And Pandars chosen magistrates,
And Puritans allowed.
Huggle-Duggle, Ha! ha! ha!
The Devil laughed aloud.

With that unto the country
Away the Devil goeth;
For there is all plain dealing,
For that the Devil knoweth.
But the rich man reaps the gains
For which the poor man ploughed.
Huggle-Duggle, Ha! ha! ha!
The Devil laughed aloud.

With that the Devil in haste
Took post away to hell,
And called his fellow furies,
And told them all on earth was well:
That falsehoods there did flourish,
Plain dealing was in a cloud.
Huggle-Duggle, Ha! ha! ha!
The devils laughed aloud.

'The Devil's Thoughts,' as we have quoted it, is from the version attributed to Coleridge, who has shown in many other ways his capacity for humorous and witty satire. He wrote, for instance, about his own 'Ancient Mariner:'

Your poem must eternal be,—
Dear sir, it cannot fail;
For 'tis incomprehensible,
And wants both head and tail.

Again, he wrote of a bad singer:

> Swans sing before they die: 'twere no bad thing
> Did certain persons die before they sing.

Very amusing, too, is what he penned after partaking of a draught of Hockheimer whilst boating on the river Rhine:

> In Spain, that land of monks and apes,
> The thing called wine doth come from grapes;
> But, on the noble River Rhine,
> The thing called gripes doth come from wine.

His epigrams on Cologne and on German drinking, as personified in two German professors, need no quotation: they are emphatically 'household words.'

Leigh Hunt was professedly neither a wit nor a humourist; yet he had a fair amount of the qualities of each. He showed in several of his poems a pleasing playfulness; whilst in two or three he rose to vivacity and sprightliness, though never to brilliance of satire. To tell the truth, his 'Feast of the Poets,' written in partial imitation of the critical squibs by Suckling and the rest, is very mildly written. The various poets in question are not unhappily characterised, but the lines have not much of the epigrammatic about them. Some run as follows:

> There was Campbell, for Hope and fine war-songs renowned,
> With a wail underneath them of tenderer sound;
> And Rogers, who follow'd, as Memory should;
> And Scott, full of Scotland's old minstrelling mood
> (The god overwhelmed him with thanks for his novels);
> Then Crabbe, asking questions regarding Greek hovels;
> And Byron, with eager indifference; and Moore,
> With admiring glad eyes that came leaping before;
> And Southey, with dust from the books on his shelf;
> And Wordsworth, whose porcelain was taken for delf;
> And Coleridge, whose poetry's poetry's self.

There is more wit and humour than this in 'Blue-Stocking Revels, or the Feast of the Violets,' a series of descriptions of, and criticisms on, the lady-writers of the day. Thus Madame D'Arblay is sketched:

And Madame D'Arblay, mighty grave all the while,
Yet at heart smitten still betwixt fun and a style,
And longing to tell us more ladies' distresses
'Twixt lords, and vulgarians, and debts for their dresses.
So deep was her curtsy, the hoop that she wore
Seemed fairly conveying her right through the floor.

And Lady Blessington:

As she swam through the doorway, like rain from a cloud,
I know not which most her face beamed with—fine creature!
Enjoyment, or judgment, or wit, or good nature.
Perhaps you have known what it is to feel longings
To pat silken shoulders at routs and such throngings;
Well, think what it was at a vision like that!
A Grace after dinner! A Venus grown fat!

Lady Morgan, too:

And dear Lady Morgan! Look, look how she comes
With her pulses all beating for freedom, like drums,—
So Irish, so modish, so mixtish, so wild,
So committing herself as she talks, like a child;
So trim yet so easy, polite yet bighearted,
That truth and she, try all she can, won't be parted.

Altogether, it must be confessed that Hunt's imitation or emulation of his great predecessors was not quite so successful as could be wished.

CHAPTER IX.

HOOD AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES.

Thomas Hood—Poet and Punster—'Up the Rhine'—'On Sir John Bowring'—'On completing Forty-seven'—'The Doubtful Sneeze'—William Makepeace Thackeray—'Jacob Omnium'—'Little Billee'—'Peg of Limavaddy'—'Persicos Odi'—Charles Shirley Brooks—A Parody—A Poetic Jumble—Epigrams—Robert Brough—'Neighbour Nelly'—Winthrop Mackworth Praed—'The Belle of the Ballroom'—'A Letter of Advice'—Edward Fitzgerald—'Chivalry at a Discount'—'Because'—Lord Macaulay—A Valentine—'The Country Clergyman's Trip to Cambridge'—Mortimer Collins—'The Positivists'—'Sky-making'—A Parody—Arthur Hugh Clough—'The Latest Decalogue'—'The Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich'—'Amours de Voyage'—'Dipsychus'—Edward Lord Lytton—'King Arthur'—John Poole—Travestie of 'Hamlet'—Wm. Edmonstoune Aytoun—'Bon Gaultier Ballads'—George Outram—Epigram—James Hannay—Epigrams—Lord Neaves—'Songs and Verses by an Old Contributor'—James Ballantine—'John Thamson's Cart'—Francis Mahoney—'The Bells o' Shandon,'—Samuel Lover—Epigram—Charles Lever—'The Widow Malone.'

CHAPTER IX.

HOOD AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES.

It was not to be expected that the generation after that which included among its members such distinguished names as those we have had to record in the previous chapter would exhibit an equal wealth of wits and humourists. There is ever a lull after a storm—in literature as in meteorology. Nevertheless, the generation which had Hood for its most prominent humourist has no cause to hide its head in shame. Apart, altogether, from the ever-memorable poet and punster, there were in those days many able men fitted to carry on the proud traditions of their fathers. Side by side with Hood was Thackeray, and with Thackeray may be ranked that other '*Punch* man'—Shirley Brooks, and, with Shirley Brooks, Robert Brough. Social poetry found exponents in Mackworth Praed, Macaulay, Edward Fitzgerald, and, in later days, Mortimer Collins. Lord Lytton, like so many other clever men, dabbled largely in satire; and Clough displayed his earnest humour in *Dipsychus*, *The Bothie of Tober na Vuolich*, *Amours de Voyage*, and many smaller pieces. The Scotch contingent was especially prominent, including as it did Aytoun and Hannay, whose reputation was renewed by men like Outram, Ballantine, and Lord Neaves. The list is not a long one, but it is a strong one, and will detain us as pleasingly as in any previous chapter.

And first for Hood. We have called him poet and punster, and it is really in these two characters that he is most interesting. As a poet, we venture to think he has not been properly estimated. People talk about, quote, or recite his 'Song of a Shirt' and 'Bridge of Sighs'—ignorant that these are, perhaps, the least truly poetical of

all his works. To most of us *The Plea of the Midsummer Fairies* is almost a dead letter; and the best of the sonnets, songs, and other lyrics are by no means describable as popular. Nor are Hood's happiest bits of humour so familiar as they might be. Ninety-nine are acquainted with 'Ben Battle' and 'Nelly Gray' to the one who is conversant with all the grim irony of the 'Ode to Rae Wilson, Esq.'—one of the most pungent *exposés* of hypocrisy ever penned by Englishman. Even this, however, pales by the side of the wonderful mass of what may be called purely comic writing which Hood gave to the world—writing in which the elements of wit and humour were so blended as to yield a compound of the most delicious fun imaginable.

We have nothing to do here with his prose performances, among which his private letters shine out as even more deliciously amusing than his premeditated utterances, if indeed premeditation had much to do even with his obvious 'pot-boilers.' He sat down to write, no doubt, with dogged perseverance and determination; but, his pen once in hand, he seems to have overflowed with easy gaiety. The amount of his witty and humorous verse is as remarkable as its variety; so much so that it is difficult to know where to begin. It enables us, however, to select as specimens of his work pieces which are in no sense of the term trite. Take, for example, the lines entitled 'Up the Rhine:'

Why, tourist, why
With passports have to do?
Prythee stay at home, and pass
The port and sherry too.

Why, tourist, why
Embark for Rotterdam?
Prythee stay at home, and take
Thy Hollands in a dram.

Why, tourist, why
To foreign climes repair?
Prythee take thy German flute,
And breathe a German air.

Why, tourist, why
The Seven Mountains view?
Any one at home can tint
A hill with Prussian blue.

Why, tourist, why
To old Colonia's walls?
Sure, to see a Wren-ish dome
One needn't leave St. Paul's.

This shows Hood at his most characteristic occupation—punning; a habit which may be further illustrated in these thoroughly Hood-ish verses 'On Sir John Bowring:'

To Bowring, man of many tongues
(All over tongues, like Rumour),
This tributary verse belongs
To paint his learned humour.

All kinds of gabs he talks, I wis,
From Latin down to Scottish;
As fluent as a parrot is,
And far from Polly-glottish.

No grammar too abstruse he meets,
However dark and verby;
He gossips Greek about the streets,
And often Russ-*in-urbe;*

Strange tongues, whate'er you do them call;—
In short, the man is able
To tell you what's o'clock in all
The dial-ects in Babel.

Take him on 'Change. Try Portuguese,
The Moorish and the Spanish,
Polish, Hungarian, Tyrolese,
The Swedish and the Danish.

Try him with these, and fifty such,
His skill will ne'er diminish;
Although you should begin in Dutch,
And end, like me, in *Fin-nish!*

Of course, Hood did something else than merely pun.

Punning was, indeed, the major portion of his business, and he carried it to a perfection never surpassed and rarely ever equalled. But, for a change, he now and then made incursions in another vein, that of surprise or incongruity—whichever you please to call it—the linking of the serious with the trivial, the alternating of the pathetic with the humorous, the high-flown with the commonplace. You see this in his famous and familiar 'Ode to his Son.' You see it, too, not so familiarly, in what he modestly describes as 'A few Lines on completing Forty-seven:'

When I reflect with serious sense,
  While years and years run on,
How soon I may be summoned hence—
  There's cook a-calling, John!

Our lives are built, so frail and poor,
  On sand, and not on rocks;
We're hourly standing at Death's door—
  There's some one double-knocks!

All human days have settled terms;
  Our fates we cannot force.
This flesh of mine will feed the worms—
  They've come to lunch, of course.

And when my body's turned to clay,
  And dear friends hear my knell,
O, let them give a sigh and say—
  I hear the up-stairs bell!

Hood was guilty, among other things, of many epigrams, a whole crop of which may be read in the pages of his *Whims and Oddities*. They chiefly depend for their point upon a pun; but though they may thus lose a good deal of true epigrammatic effect, they are not the less clever and amusing. The following, 'On a Picture called "The Doubtful Sneeze,"' appeared originally in the *London Magazine*:

The Doubtful Sneeze! A failure quite;
  A winker half, and half a gaper—
Alas, to paint on canvas here
  What should have been on tissue-paper!

Again:

When Eve upon the first of men
The apple pressed with specious cant,
O, what a thousand pities then
That Adam was not Adam-ant!

Hood must have written hundreds of such trifles altogether; and none of them, probably, were much, if at all, below mediocrity.

We have placed Thackeray next to Hood; for it is obvious that, of all his contemporaries, he most nearly approached him in the breadth and depth of his *vis comica*. As a humourist pure and simple, Thackeray is of course a greater man than Hood; but we have to do in these pages only with the humour and the wit of verse; and in that respect Thackeray must, notwithstanding his delicious ballads, follow after the creator of Miss Kilmansegg. The volume of Thackeray's *Ballads*, &c., is indeed a mine of hearty laughter; but it cannot compare with the 'splendid flower-show' (as Browning said of Tennyson) of his rival. Thackeray's happiest efforts are, perhaps, the 'Ballads of Policeman X;' and of these undoubtedly the most exquisite, as it is the most famous, is that on Jacob Omnium:

Who was this master good
Of whomb I makes these rhymes?
His name is Jacob Homnium, Exquire:
And if I'd committed crimes,
Good Lord! I wouldn't 'ave that man
Attack me in the *Times!*

But beyond all question the prince of purely comic ballads is that unapproachable one on 'Little Billee,' which may be found fully and correctly given in the author's works. Who, however, does not know much of it, if not all of it, by heart? Who is unable to narrate how, once upon a time,

There were three sailors of Bristol city
Who took a boat and went to sea: . . .
There was gorging Jack and guzzling Jimmy,
And the youngest he was little Billee;

how,

> When they got as far as the Equator,
> They'd nothing left but one split pea;

how gorging Jack then said to guzzling Jimmy,

> 'I am extremely hungaree;'

and how guzzling Jimmy replied to gorging Jack,

> 'We've nothing left, us must eat we'?

Who, too, does not remember the masterly confusion at the end, when little Billee jumps up, and declares he sees

> Jerusalem and Madagascar,
> And North and South Amerikee;
> There's the British flag a-riding at anchor,
> With Admiral Napier, K.C.B.

Is it too much to say that in this very clever masterpiece we have the germ of the *Bab Ballads* of a later day? Then, among other favourites, there is the characteristic 'Peg of Limavaddy,' with its happy-go-lucky rhymes and swinging metre:

> Presently a maid
> Enters with the liquor
> (Half a pint of ale
> Frothing in the beaker).
> Gods! I didn't know
> What my beating heart meant:
> Hebe's self, I thought,
> Entered the apartment.
> As she came she smiled,
> And the smile bewitching,
> On my word and honour,
> Lighted up the kitchen!

There is one little effort of Thackeray's which we may venture, we think, to give in full—his facile expansion or adaptation—it can hardly be called translation—of the 'Persicos Odi.' It is hardly what Horace would have

written had he written in English, for there is the least possible touch of *bourgeoisie* about it, but nevertheless the *tour de force* is happy:

Dear Lucy, you know what my wish is,—
  I hate all your Frenchified fuss:
Your silly entrées and made dishes
  Were never intended for us.

No footman in lace or in ruffles
  Need dangle behind my arm-chair,
And never mind seeking for truffles,
  Although they be never so rare.

But a plain leg of mutton, my Lucy,
  I prithee get ready at three:
Have it smoking and tender and juicy,
  And what better meat can there be?

And when it has feasted the master,
  'Twill amply suffice for the maid;
Meanwhile, I will smoke my canaster,
  And tipple my ale in the shade.

All Thackeray's very best verses appeared in the pages of *Punch*—a periodical which has at all times rejoiced in the possession of an able staff. Of this not the least prominent member, in the last generation, was Charles Shirley Brooks, one of the most typical *littérateurs* of the present century. A novelist of more than ordinary power, and a dramatist of considerable reputation, his greatest, though not of course his most permanent, successes were those which he achieved as a journalist, and especially as a comic journalist. His contributions to *Punch* during the twenty years of his connection with it were particularly admirable —so numerous, indeed, that the same high level could not always be maintained—still, never below mediocrity, and generally sparkling with the keenest wit. Brooks had especially the gift of parody, as may be seen in this skit of one of Mr. Tennyson's most pathetic lyrics:

Home they brought her lap-dog dead,
  Just run over by a fly;
Jeames to Buttons, winking, said,
  'Won't there be a row, O my!'

Then they called the flyman low,
  Said his baseness could be proved;
How she to the Beak should go—
  Yet she neither spoke nor moved.

Said her maid (and risked her place),
  'In the 'ouse it should have kept;
Flymen drives at such a pace—'
  Still the lady's anger slept.

Rose her husband, best of dears,
  Laid a bracelet on her knee,
Like a playful child she boxed his ears—
  'Sweet old pet!—let's have some tea.'*

There is also a very comical Tennysonian fragment in the form of a parody on 'The Last Tournament.' Very amusing, too, is the clever jumble of familiar lines into the shape of a professed 'Prize Poem'—a little *tour de force*, which brings out very happily the writer's unusually wide reading and very valuable gift of memory:

Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
That to be hated needs but to be seen,
Invites my lays; be present, sylvan maids,
And graceful deer reposing in the shades.

I am the Morning and the Evening Star,
Drag the slow barge, or whirl the rapid car,
While wrapt in fire the realms of ether glow,
Or private dirt on public virtue throw.

How small of all that human hearts endure
The short and simple annals of the poor!
I would commend their bodies to the rack;
At least we'll die with harness on our back.

* Mr. William Sawyer has also written an admirable parody on this poem.

Remote, unfriended, melancholy, slow,
Virtue alone is happiness below:
As vipers sting, though dead, by some review;
And now thou seest my soul's angelic hue.

Of travestie in all its phases, there is a perfect mine in Shirley Brooks's writings, just as there is of epigrams, with which he kept the pages of *Punch* very plentifully supplied. These were generally only for the occasion, and have nothing permanent in them; others, again, have an interest beyond that of the day on which they appeared. For example, take this, called 'Anathema in Excelsis:'

Creed of St. Athanasius? No, indeed:
Call it, good friends, the Anathemasian creed.

That is deserving of remembrance. Again, 'On Scotch Frugality:'

It seems that the Scots
Are much better shots,
At long distance, than most of the Englishmen are;
But this we all knew
That a Scotchman could do—
Make a small piece of metal go awfully far.

Brooks was fond of aiming his little paper-bullets of the brain at Scotchmen. He has another epigram on what he calls 'Theological Horology:'

There's this to say about the Scotch,
So bother bannocks, braes, and birks,
They can't produce a decent watch,
For Calvinists despise good works.

Referring, merely, to the contributions made by Albert Smith to the fun and fancy of his time, we seem to arrive naturally at the well-known name of Brough—a name better loved, perhaps, by the *littérateurs* and others to whom it was privately familiar than by the 'general public,' which, we fear, knows little of his work—not more, we imagine, than the fugitive pieces which figure in poetical collections. Of these, we should say that 'Neighbour Nelly,' at least, was

known to everybody, seeing that both Mr. Frederick Locker and Mr. Cholmondeley Pennell have given circulation to it. There is no more charming little lyric, in its way, than this, in which the writer tells us how,

Though a square-toes and a fogey,
  Still I've sunshine in my heart:
Still I'm fond of cakes and marbles,
  Can appreciate a tart.
I can love my neighbour Nelly
  Just as though I were a boy:
I could hand her nuts and apples
  From my depths of corduroy.

She is tall, and growing taller,
  She is vigorous of limb:
(You should see her play at cricket
  With her little brother Jim.)
She has eyes as blue as damsons,
  She has pounds of auburn curls;
She regrets the game of leap-frog
  Is prohibited to girls.

There is here a tone, a *timbre*, which you find absent from the verses, say, of Mackworth Praed. That brilliant writer could draw many notes from his poetic instrument, but nothing so full of playful humour as the poem from which we have just quoted. With Praed it is all point and pungency; he has sentimental moments, but even then he cannot come down from his stilts. His work is instinct with wit of the most flashing kind; his scorn is scathing; and his style is beautifully crisp. And he is so admirable of his kind that it is absolutely an ungrateful task to grumble about him and complain of his not being otherwise than he is. Let us take him for what he was—a typical poet of society, with his ideas and his emotions circumscribed within the magic circle of Mayfair—more, perhaps, a poet of society pure and simple than any one who preceded him or has succeeded him. No one, certainly, ever had more of the true 'society' manner—of the familiarity with

Belgravian men, women, and things; of the somewhat stately courtesy of the *haute noblesse*. As the laureate of balls and of receptions, of drawing-rooms and manor-houses, of public schools and universities, Praed still reigns *facile princeps*. We have better poets than he, but none who have exactly the same *métier*, none who surpass him on his own particular ground. In society portraiture especially, his touch was exquisite; he could draw a fashionable 'miss' with an unerring pen. Take, for example, these lines from one of the most popular of his poems—it is almost hopeless to find a good poem of his which is not popular:

She talk'd,—of politics or prayers,—
  Or Southey's prose, or Wordsworth's sonnets,—
Of danglers—or of dancing bears,
  Of battles—or the last new bonnets,
By candle-light at twelve o'clock,
  To me it mattered not a tittle
If those bright lips had quoted Locke,
  I might have thought they murmured Little.*

Through sunny May, through sultry June,
  I loved her with a love eternal;
I spoke her praises to the moon,
  I wrote them to the Sunday journal:
My mother laughed; I soon found out
  That ancient ladies have no feeling;
My father frowned; but how should gout
  See any happiness in kneeling? . . .

And she was flattered, worshipped, bored;
  Her steps were watched, her dress was noted;
Her poodle dog was quite adored,
  Her sayings were extremely quoted;
She laughed, and every heart was glad,
  As if the taxes were abolished;
She frowned, and every look was sad,
  As if the Opera were demolished.

* The *nom de plume* under which Moore published his early poems.

She smiled on many, just for fun,—
  I knew that there was nothing in it;
I was the first—the only one
  Her heart had thought of for a minute.
I knew it, for she told me so
  In phrase which was divinely moulded.
She wrote a charming hand—and, oh!
  How sweetly all her notes were folded!

Our love was like most other loves,—
  A little glow, a little shiver,
A rosebud, and a pair of gloves,
  And 'Fly not yet' upon the river;
Some jealousy of some one's heir,
  Some hopes of dying broken-hearted,
A miniature, a lock of hair,
  The usual vows,—and then we parted.

We parted; months and years rolled by;
  We met again four summers after;
Our parting was all sob and sigh,
  Our meeting was all mirth and laughter.
For in my heart's most secret cell
  There had been many other lodgers;
And she was not the ball-room's belle,
  But only—Mrs. Something Rogers!

How pleasant is the delicate vein of cynicism that runs through all this! How easy the flow of words, how thoroughly satisfying the style! Nothing is overdone; everything is perfectly well-bred. Neither the wit nor the humour makes us absolutely laugh—laughter is so vulgar, 'don't you know!' But we smile unmistakeably, and enjoy the lines as an epicure inhales the aroma of some pet culinary concoction. How vivacious, again, are the following swift-going verses, in which Praed is seen in his liveliest of humours:

If he wears a top-boot in his wooing,
  If he comes to you riding a cob,
If he talks of his baking or brewing,
  If he puts up his feet on the hob,

If he ever drinks port after dinner,
  If his brow or his breeding is low,
If he calls himself 'Thomson' or 'Skinner,'
  My own Araminta, say 'No!'

If he studies the news in the papers
  While you are preparing the tea,
If he talks of the damps or the vapours
  While moonlight lies soft on the sea,
If he's sleepy while you are capricious,
  If he has not a musical 'Oh!'
If he does not call Werther delicious,
  My own Araminta, say 'No!'

If he ever sets foot in the City
  Among the stockbrokers and Jews,
If he has not a heart full of pity,
  If he don't stand six feet in his shoes,
If his lips are not redder than roses,
  If his hands are not whiter than snow,
If he has not the model of noses,
  My own Araminta, say 'No!'

If he speaks of a tax or a duty,
  If he does not look grand on his knees,
If he's blind to a landscape of beauty,
  Hills, valleys, rocks, waters, and trees,
If he doats not on desolate towers,
  If he likes not to hear the blast blow,
If he knows not the language of flowers,
  My own Araminta, say 'No!'

It is in this sort of thing that we see Praed at his best. His sternly satiric efforts are not so successful, though there is undoubted vigour in his strictures on the 'King of the Sandwich Islands,' *e.g.* George IV. Dozens of other things might be quoted to illustrate his versatility, but he is a man whose whole writings should be studied, and it is to them that we direct the reader who is still a stranger to them.

Praed had hundreds of imitators, and is not without

them still. One of the most flagrant was Edward Fitzgerald, who occasionally came so near to Praed in excellence, that his friends and the critics declared Praed wrote his verses. Praed might certainly have written, and have had no occasion to be ashamed of, the lines with which Fitzgerald begins his poem on 'Chivalry at a Discount.' They have not quite so much epigrammatic point as Praed's, but they have perhaps rather more *bonhomie*, along with a fair modicum of pungency of a mild description:

Fair cousin mine! the golden days
  Of old romance are over,
And minstrels now care nought for bays,
  Nor damsels for a lover;
And hearts are cold, and lips are mute
  That kindled once with passion,
And now we've neither lance nor lute,
  And tilting's out of fashion.

Yet weeping Beauty mourns the time
  When Love found words in flowers;
When softest sighs were breathed in rhyme,
  And sweetest songs in bowers;
Now wedlock is a sober thing,
  No more of chains or forges!
A plain young man, a plain gold ring,
  The curate, and St. George's.

Then every cross-bow had a string,
  And every heart a fetter;
And making love was quite the thing,
  And making verses better;
And maiden-aunts were never seen,
  And gallant *beaux* were plenty;
And lasses married at sixteen,
  And died at one-and-twenty.

Then hawking was a noble sport,
  And chess a pretty science;
And huntsmen learnt to blow a *morte*,
  And heralds a defiance;

And knights and spearmen showed their might,
  And timid hinds took warning;
And hypocras was warmed at night
  And coursers in the morning.

Then plumes and pennons were prepared,
  And patron-saints were lauded;
And noble deeds were bravely dared,
  And noble dames applauded;
And Beauty played the leech's part,
  And wounds were healed with syrup;
And warriors sometimes lost a heart,
  But never lost a stirrup. . . .

Fitzgerald was, on the whole, more genuinely sentimental than Praed was. He shows us, more than his master does, the tender side of social life, and does so with a neatness and sweetness of versification which deserve their due measure of commendation. We give, as a specimen of this vein of Fitzgerald's, the verses in which he tells his lady-love how it is he comes to sing about her. It is, he says,

Because your little tiny nose
  Turns up so pert and funny;
Because I know you choose your beaux
  More for their mirth than money;
Because I think you'd rather twirl
  A waltz with me to guide you,
Than talk small nonsense with an earl
  And a coronet beside you!

Because you don't object to walk,
  And are not given to fainting;
Because you have not learnt to talk
  Of flowers and Poonah painting;
Because I think you'd scarce refuse
  To sew one on a button;
Because I know you'd sometimes choose
  To dine on simple mutton!

Because I think I'm just so weak
  As, some of those fine morrows,

To ask you if you'll let me speak
  My story and *my* sorrows;
Because the rest's a simple thing,
  A matter quickly over,
A church—a priest—a sigh—a ring—
  And a chaise-and-four to Dover.

It is, perhaps, a stretch of the imagination to include Lord Macaulay among the poets of society because he wrote a few album verses and wrote them well. Still, it is impossible altogether to ignore the author of the Valentine addressed 'To the Hon. M. C. Stanhope,' in which there are so much agreeable vivacity and such clever turns of expression. There is first the salutation to the day:

Hail! day of music, day of love,
On earth below, in air above,
In air the turtle fondly moans,
The linnet pipes in joyous tones;
On earth the postman toils along,
Bent double by huge bales of song,
Where, rich with many a gorgeous dye,
Blazes all Cupid's heraldry—
Myrtles and roses, doves and sparrows,
Love-knots and altars, lamps and arrows.
What nymph without wild hopes and fears
The double rap this morning hears!
Unnumbered lasses, young and fair,
From Bethnal Green to Belgrave-square,
With cheeks high-flushed, and hearts loud-beating,
Await the tender annual greeting.

Then the poet begins to picture the bridal-day of the young maiden he addresses:

Prophetic rage my bosom swells—
I taste the cake—I hear the bells!
From Conduit-street the close array
Of chariots barricades the way
To where I see, with outstretched hand,
Majestic, thy great kinsman stand. . . .

Gay favours, thick as flakes of snow,
Brighten St. George's portico:
Within I see the chancel's pale,
The orange flowers, the Brussels veil,
The page on which those fingers white,
Still trembling from the awful rite,
For the last time shall faintly trace
The name of Stanhope's noble race.

Those who want to see Macaulay at his humorous best —never at any time very much—must go to his election ballad, 'The Country Clergyman's Trip to Cambridge,' in which there are some good strokes of characterisation. The party who join in the trip are thus described, for example:

There were parsons in boot and in bushel,
  There were parsons above and below.

There were Sneaker and Griper, a pair,
  Who stick to Lord Mulesby like leeches;
A snug chaplain of plausible air,
  Who writes my Lord Goslingham's speeches.
Dr. Buzz, who alone is a host,
  Who, with arguments heavy as lead,
Proves six times a week in the *Post*
  That flesh somehow differs from bread.

Dr. Nimrod, whose orthodox toes
  Are seldom withdrawn from the stirrup;
Dr. Humdrum, whose eloquence flows
  Like droppings of sweet-poppy syrup;
Dr. Rosygill, puffing and fanning,
  And wiping away perspiration;
Dr. Humbug, who proved Mr. Canning
  The beast in St. John's Revelation.

This, for Macaulay, was very funny indeed.

In Mortimer Collins we have a very different person to deal with. He was a man who never did full justice to his powers, owing both to constitutional temperament and

to the modern necessity for pot-boiling; but he has left behind him nevertheless matter in the shape of witty and humorous verse, some of which, at least, the world will not willingly let die. His sentimental verse is unequal, for Collins was not fond of the *labor limæ*, writing, if anything, with too much facility. He was satisfied with turning out agreeable lyrics, and there was an end of it; but few of his serious poems can be called quite satisfactory. It is different with his satiric work. He is best known, perhaps, by his contributions to the newspapers and magazines; but give us, as the most original and characteristic of Collins's productions, that least known of them all, *The British Birds*, a modernisation of the old Greek comedy, much of which, again, is far from adequate, but in which is included some of the happiest *jeux d'esprit* of recent days. These take the form, in some of the best instances, of quizzical description of certain modern scientific theories—theories for which Collins, who was essentially Conservative, never had an atom of respect. He did not, however, waste his time in efforts to refute them, preferring rather to treat them in a tone of persiflage, which he very successfully adopted—of which he was indeed incomparably our ablest master since the incomparable author of *Don Juan*. Collins's most excellent work in this direction was certainly his celebration of the Positivists:

Life and the Universe show spontaneity:
Down with ridiculous notions of Deity!
    Churches and creeds are all lost in the mists;
    Truth must be sought with the Positivists.

Wise are their teachers beyond all comparison,
Comte, Huxley, Tyndall, Mill, Morley, and Harrison;
    Who will adventure to enter the lists
    With such a squadron of Positivists?

Social arrangements are awful miscarriages;
Cause of all crime is our system of marriages.
    Poets with sonnets, and lovers with trysts,
    Kindle the ire of the Positivists.

Husbands and wives should be all one community,
Exquisite freedom with absolute unity.
Wedding-rings worse are than manacled wrists—
Such is the creed of the Positivists.

There was an ape in the days that were earlier;
Centuries passed, and his hair became curlier;
Centuries more gave a thumb to his wrist—
Then he was Man, and a Positivist.

If you are pious (mild form of insanity)
Bow down and worship the mass of humanity.
Other religions are buried in mists;
We're our own Gods, say the Positivists.

This seems to us perfect of its kind—perfect as a witty *reductio ad absurdum* of a creed which is particularly open to ridicule of the quiet, refined kind. In the same manner is the following sarcastic exposition of Professor Tyndall's views on 'Sky-Making:'

Just take a trifling handful, O philosopher!
Of magic matter: give it a slight toss over
The ambient æther—and I don't see why
You shouldn't make a sky.

O hours Utopian which we may anticipate!
Thick London fog how easy 'tis to dissipate,
And make the most pea-soupy day as clear
As Bass's brightest beer!

Poet-professor! Now my brain thou kindlest:
I am become a most determined Tyndallist.
If it is known a fellow can make skies,
Why not make bright blue eyes?

This to deny, the folly of a dunce it is:
Surely a girl as easy as a sunset is.
If you can make a halo or eclipse,
Why not two laughing lips?

The creed of Archimedes, erst of Sicily,
And of D'Israeli . . . *forti nil difficile*,
Is likewise mine. Pygmalion was a fool
Who should have gone to school.

Why should an author scribble rhymes or articles?
Bring me a dozen tiny Tyndall particles;
Therefrom I'll coin a dinner, Nash's wine,
And a nice girl to dine.

This is not quite so successful as 'The Positivists,' which is really good enough to be remembered by and bye; yet it is written in a marvellously easy way—in a way, we mean, which looks so easy, and is yet so difficult—for some of us! Collins probably thought little of these efforts at the time of writing, but they seem to us undoubtedly his happiest performances. Before leaving *The British Birds*, however, let us quote from it a parody on Swinburnian rhyme and rhythm, which may serve as a specimen of his powers of simple burlesque:

O cool in the summer is salad,
And warm in the winter is love;
And a poet shall sing you a ballad
Delicious thereon and thereof.
A singer am I, if no sinner,
My muse has a marvellous wing,
And I willingly worship at dinner
The sirens of spring.

Take endive—like love it is bitter,
Take beet—for like love it is red:
Crisp leaf of the lettuce shall glitter,
And cress from the rivulet's bed:
Anchovies, foam-born, like the lady
Whose beauty has maddened this bard;
And olives, from groves that are shady;
And eggs—boil 'em hard.

In Collins's volume of miscellaneous *Poems* will be found several other examples of his persiflage—notably the lines 'Ad Chloen,' which are exceedingly felicitous. Chloe's reply is not quite so deserving of remark. Collins was also a voluminous contributor to the *Owl*, the *Realm*, and other newspapers, in which some of his very best productions

saw the light, and from which it is to be hoped they will be unearthed some day.

Arthur Hugh Clough* claims a place among the humourists by reason of the bitter satire of his *Dipsychus*, the more genial sarcasm of his *Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich*, and the trenchant character of certain of his lyrics. The latter, so far as they come within the scope of this volume, are but few in number, but they include a good deal of admirable verse. Clough's style is essentially terse and vivid, and he never minces terms. His stroke is swift and true, and never fails to do the work appointed for it. Take, for example, the lines called 'The Latest Decalogue:'

Thou shalt have one God only; who
Would be at the expense of two?
No graven images may be
Worshipped, except the currency:
Swear not at all; for, for thy curse
Thine enemy is none the worse:
At church on Sunday to attend
Will serve to keep the world thy friend:
Honour thy parents; that is, all
From whom advancement may befall:
Thou shalt not kill; but need'st not strive
Officiously to keep alive:
Do not adultery commit;
Advantage rarely comes of it:
Thou shalt not steal; an empty feat,
When it's so lucrative to cheat:
Bear not false witness; let the lie
Have time on its own wings to fly:
Thou shalt not covet, but tradition
Approves all forms of competition.

There is something of the pithy vigour of Swift in this. Kindlier and more humorous in tone is *The Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich*, with its quaint description of the Oxford reading party in the Highlands. First of all, Hope:

Hope was first, black-tied, white-waistcoated, simple.

* Born 1819, died 1861. The *Bothie* appeared in 1848.

The Tutor:

The grave man, nicknamed Adam,
White-tied, clerical, silent, with antique square-cut waistcoat,
Formal, unchanged, of black cloth, but with sense and feeling beneath it;
Skilful in Ethics and Logic, in Pindar and Poets unrivalled,
Shady in Latin, said Lindsay, but topping in Plays and Aldrich.

Lindsay himself:

The lively, cheery, cigar-loving Lindsay,
Lindsay the ready of speech, the Piper, the Dialectician.
This was his title from Adam, because of the words he invented,
Who in three weeks had created a dialect new for the party.

Airlie:

Effulgent as god of Olympus;
Blue, perceptibly blue, was the coat that had white silk facings,
Waistcoat blue, coral-buttoned, the white tie finely adjusted,
Coral, moreover, the studs on a shirt as of crochet of women.

Hewson:

Hewson, a radical hot, hating lords and scorning ladies,
Silent mostly, but often reviling in fire and fury
Feudal tenures, mercantile lords, competition and bishops.

In *Amours de Voyage*, again, there is a good deal of not unpleasant cynicism of the gentle sort, of which alone the nature of the writer was susceptible. You see it in passages such as this:

Dulce it is, and decorum, no doubt, for the country to fall—to
Offer one's blood an oblation to freedom, and die for the cause—yet
Still, individual culture is also something, and no man

Finds quite distinct the assurance that he, of all others, is called on,
Or would be justified even, in taking away from the world, that
Precious creature, himself. Nature sent him here to abide here;
Else why send him at all? Nature wants him still, it is likely;
On the whole, we are meant to look after ourselves; it is certain
Each has to eat for himself, digest for himself, and in general
Care for his own dear life, and see to his own preservation;
Nature's intention, in most things uncertain, in this is decisive.

Again:

Juxtaposition, in fine; and what is juxtaposition?
Look you, we travel along in the railway carriage or steamer,
And, *pour passer le temps*, till the tedious journey is ended,
Lay aside paper or book, to talk to the girl that is next one;
And, *pour passer le temps*, with the terminus all but in prospect,
Talk of eternal ties and marriages made in heaven.

Clough's most earnest satire is put into the mouth of the evil spirit in *Dipsychus*, a character having a certain species of affinity to the Mephistopheles of *Faust*, but having also an originality and a freshness of its own. It is a worldly spirit, penetrated with a sense of the excellence of things as they are, and having for its aim the destruction of the high ideals formed by Dipsychus, the other actor in the little dialogue-drama. One of the songs supposed to be sung by it marks, perhaps, the highest point reached by Clough's satiric faculty;—we mean that with the refrain of—

How pleasant it is to have money, heigho!
How pleasant it is to have money.

We quote a few verses from the longer version of it,—a version which may be found in Mr. Locker's *Lyra Elegantiarum*:

They may talk as they please about what they call pelf,
And how one ought never to think of one's self,
How pleasures of thought surpass eating and drinking;
My pleasure of thought is the pleasure of thinking
How pleasant it is to have money, heigho!
How pleasant it is to have money. . .

It is all very well to be handsome and tall,
Which certainly makes you look well at a ball;
It's all very well to be clever and witty,
But if you are poor, why it's only a pity.
So needful it is to have money, heigho!
So needful it is to have money.

There's something undoubtedly in a fine air,
To know how to smile, and be able to stare;
High breeding is something, but well bred or not,
In the end the one question is, what have you got?
So needful it is to have money, heigho!
So needful it is to have money.

And the angels in pink and the angels in blue,
In muslins and moirés so lovely and new,
What is it they want, and so wish you to guess,
But if you have money, the anwer is yes.
So needful, they tell you, is money, heigho!
So needful it is to have money.

Lord Lytton* (it would be better, perhaps, if we all agreed to call him 'Bulwer'!)—Lord Lytton, we have said, dabbled largely in satire, and satire of a particularly personal kind. His *St. Stephen's* was a series of vigorous sketches, largely informed by caustic observation, of famous orators of the House of Commons. His *New Timon* dealt to a considerable extent with living celebrities, and with no tender hand; whilst his *King Arthur*, though it professes to be busied with men of a fictitious age, really consists of full-length portraits of many of the writer's own contemporaries, couched generally in, at any rate, a semi-satiric form. Thus

* Edward, Lord Lytton, born 1805, died 1873. The *New Timon* was published in 1845, the *King Arthur* in 1848.

Guizot, the French statesman, was limned under the guise of one Astutio:

And yet Astutio was a man of worth
Before the brain had reasoned out the heart;
But now he learned to look upon the earth
As peddling hucksters look upon the mart;
Took souls for wares, and conscience for a till;
And damned his fame to save his master's will.

Much lore he had in men, and states, and things,
And kept his memory wrapped in prim precision
With histories, laws, and pedigrees of kings,
And moral saws, which ran through each division,
All neatly coloured with appropriate hue—
The histories black, the morals heavenly blue!

But statecraft, mainly, was his pride and boast;
The golden 'medium' was his guiding star,
Which means 'move on till you are uppermost,
And then things can't be better than they are!'
Brief, in two rules he summed the ends of man—
'Keep all you have, and try for all you can!'

Mention, at least, must be made of the travestie of *Hamlet* perpetrated by Poole the dramatist.* This celebrated burlesque still holds the stage, but it is surely provocative rather of melancholy than of mirth. The best thing in it is the following parody of a famous speech by Hamlet to Ophelia:

Let me tell you, Miss Ophelia, your behaviour's very rude,
And your whims and freaks and fancies ought in time to be subdued;
So, if my advice will better you, to give it 'tis my duty:
Imprimis—Let your honesty discourse not with your beauty.
Won't you, won't you, won't you to a nunnery go?

I told you once I loved you, but 'twas easy to perceive
That I didn't care a fig for you, as now you may believe;

* John Poole, author of *Paul Pry*, &c.

In future trust to nobody, we're arrant knaves at best,
And I (as soon you'll find, Miss) am no better than the rest.
Won't you, &c.

If you marry (just to comfort you), this plague take for your portion,
You'll not escape from calumny, however great your caution;
But, if you wed, pray wed a fool, if disengaged your heart is—
I need not state my reason,—but it's better for both parties.
Won't you, &c.

I've heard, too, of your paintings—that you use both red and white,
Heav'n gave you one face, and to make another is not right.
Your pranks have made me mad, so no more wedding-bells shall jingle—
The married may remain so, but the rest shall all keep single.
Won't you, &c.

The period under review is remarkable for the regiment of men whom Scotland contributed to the army of the humourists. First among these was William Edmonstoune Aytoun,* who lives in literature as a facile writer of amusing fiction and of chivalrous and witty verse. The fiction may be found scattered up and down among the *Tales from Blackwood;* the chivalrous verse ranks along with the rhythmical utterances of Macaulay, being, like them, full of the poetry of rhetoric. Whilst, however, Aytoun is best known, perhaps, to the people, and to his countrymen especially, as the author of 'The Burial March of Dundee,' he is most esteemed, perhaps, among the cultivated class as the author of *Firmilian*, and as the joint-author of the *Bon Gaultier Ballads*. Many have written

* Born 1813, died 1865. *Firmilian* appeared in 1854.

as entertaining stories and as spirited poems, but there are few burlesques happier than the ultra-spasmodic tragedy referred to, and few volumes more full of wit and humour in its permanent forms than the volume of the *Ballads*. The respective authorship of the latter still remains unindicated, but it is surely not ungenerous to attribute the best efforts in the work to the nimble hand and pen of Aytoun. Mr. Theodore Martin has done nothing in his own name to show that he possesses any capacity for persiflage; whereas, on the other hand, Aytoun has *Firmilian* to point to in addition to the *Gaultier Ballads*. It is surely to him that we owe the admirable parodies on Tennyson and others which form one of the best attractions of the work. His, surely, was the hand which penned the request of the later Queen of the May:

You may lay me in my bed, mother—my head is throbbing sore,
And, prithee, mother, let the sheets be duly aired before
And, if you'd do a kindness to your poor desponding child,
Draw me a pint of beer, mother—and, mother, draw it mild!

His, too, must have been the fancy which dictated the fierce denunciations of the 'lovelorn' hero, *à la Locksley Hall*:

Cursèd be the Bank of England notes, that tempt the soul to sin!
Cursèd be the want of acres, doubly cursed the want of tin!

Cursèd be the marriage contract, that enslaved thy soul to greed!
Cursèd be the sallow lawyer, that prepared and drew the deed!

Cursèd be his foul apprentice, who the loathsome fees did earn!
Cursèd be the clerk and parson, cursèd be the whole concern!

We may with equal justice lay at the door of Aytoun rather than of Martin the lines which tell the story of 'The Massacre of the Macpherson:'

In this fery way
  Tied ta faliant Fhairshon,
Who was always thought
  A superior person.

Fhairshon had a son,
  Who married Noah's daughter,
And nearly spoilt ta flood
  By trinking up ta water.

Which he would have done,
  I at least believe it,
Had ta mixture been
  Only half Glenlivet.

A good deal of the fun of the volume consists of efforts in the way of what we have termed 'surprises'—of pieces beginning sentimentally but ending with an unexpected quip or quiddity. Take, for example, his address 'To a Forget-me-not,' found in his emporium of love tokens. After a long apostrophe to it, he says:

Oh, Memory! thou art but a sigh
  For friendships dead and loves forgot,
And many a cold and altered eye
  That once did say, Forget me not!

And I must bow me to thy laws,
  For—odd although it may be thought—
I can't tell who the deuce it was
  That gave me this forget-me-not!

Among the least known of the *Ballads* is the following, which may also, we think, be fairly attributed to Aytoun, and which is called 'The Lay of the Levite:'

There is a sound that's dear to me,
  It haunts me in my sleep;
I wake, and, if I hear it not,
  I cannot choose but weep.

Above the roaring of the wind,
  Above the river's flow,
Methinks I hear the mystic cry
  Of 'Clo!—old Clo!'

The exile's song, it thrills among
  The dwellings of the free;
Its sound is strange to English ears,
  But 'tis not strange to me;
For it hath shook the tented field
  In ages long ago,
And hosts have quailed before the cry
  Of 'Clo!—old Clo!'

O, lose it not! forsake it not!
  And let no time efface
The memory of that solemn sound,
  The watchword of our race;
For not by dark and eagle eye,
  The Hebrew shalt thou know,
So well as by the plaintive cry
  Of 'Clo!—old Clo!'

Even now, perchance, by Jordan's banks,
  Or Sidon's sunny walls,
Where, dial-like, to portion time
  The palm-tree's shadow falls,
The pilgrims, wending on their way,
  Will linger as they go,
And listen to the distant cry
  Of 'Clo!—old Clo!'

Another of the Northern humourists was George Outram, an Edinburgh lawyer,* who is remembered—when remembered at all—by his single volume of *Lyrics, Legal and Miscellaneous*. In this is enshrined many a quaint bit of satire, aimed generally at the law, and things pertaining to it, but now and then directed against general abuses. Here is a quatrian which Outram wrote 'On Hearing a Lady praise a certain Rev. Doctor's Eyes:'

* Born 1805, died 1856.

I cannot praise the Doctor's eyes;
  I never saw his glance divine;
He always shuts them when he prays,
  And when he preaches he shuts mine.

It is as an epigrammatist, and as an epigrammatist only, that James Hannay* comes within our plan. Though he wrote brilliantly about satirists he was no satirist himself, except in the way of an occasional couplet or quatrain. A few of each may be read in his little book of *Sketches and Criticisms*, in which he reprinted such of his *jeux d'esprit* as he thought worth preserving. Among them is a very bitter saying concerning Edinburgh, a city in which he passed a portion of his life:

Pompous the boast! and yet a truth it speaks;
A modern Athens—fit for modern Greeks.

You get an exhibition of his vehement Toryism in these lines 'On a Radical:'

Blogg rails against high birth. Yes, Blogg, you see
Your ears are longer than your pedigree.

So, again, 'Of a Reformer:'

Tomkins, they say, will clear the land
  Of every foul abuse:
So chimneys in the olden time
  Were cleansèd by a goose.

Lord Neaves was born before Hannay, but he died after him. He was the last, apparently, of the school of wits and humourists which Edinburgh for so long maintained and cherished. He was, so to speak, the Mortimer Collins of Scotland, in so far as he rivalled—some may say excelled—Collins in his capacity for casting ridicule upon modern theories and notions. We have already noted the success with which Collins poked his fun at the creed of the Positivists, and at the sky-making 'sentiment' of Professor Tyndall. In the same way Lord Neaves pointed the finger of persiflage at Lord Monboddo, at Darwin, at Grimm, at

* Born 1827, died 1873.

the 'women's rights' party, at Stuart Mill, at Tyndall again, at the Sabbatarians, and at the teetotallers. So far as number of subjects goes he certainly surpassed the English writer, but we doubt if he had quite the same felicity of satiric expression. His *forte* was rather in the quiet vein of humour which runs through all his compositions, making the general effect pleasing, but not exciting attention very frequently by the vigour or the brilliance of the style. In his skit upon the 'Origin of Species,' he has a verse very like the best one in Collins's lines on the Positivists:

An ape with a pliable thumb and big brain,
When the gift of the gab he had managed to gain,
As a Lord of Creation established his reign,
Which nobody can deny.

Very good, too, are the verses in which he draws a picture of the possibility of a decline in species if we do not behave ourselves properly:

I'm sadly afraid, if we do not take care,
A relapse to low-life may our prospects impair,
So of beastly propensities let us beware,
Which nobody can deny.

Their lofty position our children may lose,
And, reduced to all-fours, must then narrow their views,
Which would wholly unfit them for filling our shoes,
Which nobody can deny.

Their vertebræ next might be taken away,
When they'd sink to an oyster, or insect, some day,
Or the pitiful part of a polypus play,
Which nobody can deny.

This is how he describes the Darwinian idea of the 'Origin of Man:'

Now Darwin proves as clear as mud,
That, endless ages ere the Flood,
The Coming Man's primeval form
Was simply an ascidian worm;
And having then the habit got
Of passing liquor down his throat,

He keeps it still, and shows full well
That man—was—once—a Leather Bottèl.

As for the 'Origin of Language,' he cares nought about it:

In courtship suppose you can't sing
Your Cara, your Liebe, your Zoè,
A kiss and a sight of the ring
Will more quickly prevail with your Chloe.
Or if you in twenty strange tongues
Could call for a beef-steak and bottle,
A purse with less learning and lungs
Would bring them much nearer your throttle.

He disposes of the 'shrieking sisterhood' in exactly the same genial fashion:

In Logic a woman may seldom excel;
But in Rhetoric always she bears off the bell.
Fair Portia will show woman's talent for law,
When in old Shylock's bond she could prove such a flaw.
She would blunder in Physic no worse than the rest,
She could leave things to Nature as well as the best;
She could feel at your wrist, she could finger your fee;
Then why should a woman not get a degree?

From the Tyndallian theory about 'dust and disease,' he draws a series of morals as pungent as they are humorous:

All places alike these intruders infest,
And 'tis thought that St. Stephen's is none of the best;
Where Faction and Folly are busy as bees,
There will always be plenty of Dust and Disease.

In Westminster Hall, where the lawyers convene,
These pestilent particles ever are seen;
Where wrangling and wrath can be hired with big fees,
You are sure of a market for Dust and Disease.

Some attacks on the lungs, that of woe would be full,
Are repelled by a filter of coarse cotton-wool;
But a barrier of brass, or a *chevaux de frise*,
Won't exclude some descriptions of Dust and Disease.

He has no patience with the sensational novel of the period:

Tame is Virtue's school;
  Paint, as more effective,
Villain, knave, and fool,
  With always a detective.
Hate for Love may sit,
  Gloom will do for Gladness,
Banish Sense and Wit,
  And dash in lots of Madness.

Stir the broth about;
  Keep the furnace glowing;
Soon we'll pour it out
  In three bright volumes flowing.
Some may jest and jibe;
  We know where the shop is,
Ready to subscribe
  For a thousand copies!

Still less sympathy has he with the Sabbatarianism which would make of Sunday a day of dismality rather than of true rest:

These gardens, their walks and green bowers,
  Might be free to the poor man for one day;
But no, the glad plants and gay flowers
  Mustn't bloom or smell sweetly on Sunday. . . .

Abroad we forbid folks to roam,
  For fear they get social or frisky,
But of course they can sit still at home,
  And get dismally drunk upon whisky.

Then, though we can't certainly tell
  How mirth may molest us on Monday;
At least, to begin the week well,
  Let us all be unhappy on Sunday.

His attitude towards teetotalism and Permissive Bill-ism is notorious; he pierced them both with arrowy shafts of irony which still have point and to spare. He writes of water:

At luncheon, too, I drink it,
And strength it seems to bring;
When really good, I think it
A liquor for a king.

But I forgot to mention—
'Tis best to be sincere—
I use an old invention
That makes it into beer.

Everybody remembers his description of Sir Wilfrid Lawson's famous measure:

O! it's a little simple Bill,
That seeks to pass *incog.*,
To *permit* ME to *prevent* YOU
From having a glass of grog.

Neaves died in 1876, and was followed in 1877 by James Ballantine, a writer who, though not primarily a humourist, has left some very humorous verse behind him. Unlike Neaves, he wrote sometimes in dialect, and it was in this form, as might be anticipated, that he wrote most characteristically and amusingly. The story of 'John Thamson's Cart' is, perhaps, as good a specimen of his manner as could be selected:

Auld John Thamson rade hame frae the fair,
Late, late on a cauld winter night, O!
He had toomed his three caggies, and maybe ane mair,
Nae ferlie his head it was light, O!
But his horse kenn'd the gate, sae John lay in his cart,
Sleeping as sound as a tap, O!
And the horse draigled on through the sleet an' the dart,
While Johnnie lay taking his nap, O!

At length at the foot of a stieve an' shey brae,
Auld Bawsie drew breath an' stood still, O!
An' dozin' fell dreaming o' sweet-scented hay,
While Jock dream't o' rich reamin' yill, O!
John Thamson's gude wife cam' her liege lord to seek,
Wi' a bowit that shone like a star, O!
For though she had lectured him week after week,
He grew aye the langer the waur, O!

'My certy!' quo' she, 'but I'll play him a fleg,
As sure as Jean Thamson's my name, O!
Sae frae the cart trauses syne she lowsed the auld naig,
An' slippit it straught awa' hame, O!
The wind it grew bleak, and John Thamson awoke,
An' he hyted, he huppit,—in vain, O!
He ferlied what gaured his horse stand like a stock,
Till he graipit an' felt it was gane, O!

Syne back to the toll in a hurry he ran,
An' the tollman he waukèd in fricht, O!
'Can I be John Thamson? come tell me, gude man,
Has John Thamson passed by the nicht, O!'
'Gude help us, Jock, is't yoursel' or your ghost?'
The tollman he cried wi' a start, O!
'Gin I be John Thamson, a horse I hae lost,
But gin no, I hae fund—a cart, O!'

John Thamson grew sober, John Thamson ran hame,
Skelp, skelping through dub an' through mire, O!
He was met at the door by his couthy auld dame,
Who luggit him straught to the byre, O!
There his horse stood full snug. 'Ay, puir Bawsie,' quo' she,
'He eats, he drinks only his fill, O!'
'Ah!' quo' Jock, 'but he hadna a crony like me,
Sayin', Here's t' ye,' owre a drap yill, O!'

The Irish contributions to the present chapter are but few in number, comprising, as they do, but three names only,—those of 'Father Prout,' Samuel Lover, and Charles Lever. These, however, are great names to conjure with, and recall occasions of pure jollity and geniality than which there are none jollier or more genial in the history of English Literature. Certainly it is too late nowadays to celebrate the ready pen and overflowing humour of Francis Mahoney*—a pen controlled by a taste nourished in the purest classicism, and a humour exuding from a nature rich in hearty animal spirits. Mahoney was of the school of Porson—a scholar as well as a humourist—but a happier combination of the two than the famous Grecian. What a

*Born 1805, died 1866. The *Reliques* appeared in 1836 and 1875.

fund of delightful reading there is, to be sure, in the *Reliques of Father Prout!* How, if they breathe of Virgil and of Horace, they have a scent, too, of the pipe and the potheen! Especially do they breathe of Ireland—of the land which Mahoney loved so well, and which has so much reason to be proud of him. Irishmen may well be anxious to claim kindred with him who wrote so quaintly, and withal so tenderly, of 'The Bells of Shandon:'

I've heard bells ringing
Full many a clime in;
Tolling sublime in
Cathedral shrine,
While at a glib-rate
Brass tongues would vibrate—
But all this music
Spake nought like thine;

For memory dwelling
On each proud swelling
Of the belfry knelling
Its bold notes free,
Made the bells of Shandon
Sound far more grand on
The pleasant waters
Of the river Lee.

I've heard bells tolling
Old Adrian's Mole in,
Their thunder rolling
From the Vatican,
And cymbals glorious
Swinging uproarious
In the gorgeous turrets
Of Notre Dame;

But thy sounds were sweeter
Than the dome of Peter
Flings o'er the Tiber,
Pealing solemnly;

O the bells of Shandon
Sound far more grand on
The pleasant waters
Of the river Lee.

Samuel Lover* had in him much of the spirit of Mahoney. He had not, indeed, the fine aroma of scholarship which Mahoney had, but he had high spirits of a similar kind, and, in his way, quite as happy a knack at a convivial song. In saying this we do not forget the fine pathos of many of his pieces: on the contrary, where the pathos is the keenest, there also is the humour most intense. Everybody knows the songs of 'Rory O'More' and 'Molly Carew.' Not so well known, perhaps, is this epigram by Lover upon marriage-making, which we give rather than pass him by without quotation:

Though matches are all made in heaven, they say,
Yet Hymen, who mischief oft hatches,
Sometimes deals with the house t'other side of the way,
And there they make Lucifer-matches.

Substitute one letter for another, and in the place of Lover you have Lever,† a prose writer primarily, but able now and then, when the afflatus seized him, to turn out as sprightly a copy of verses as either Lover or Mahoney. His rhymes are mainly of the conventional Irish sort—much more conventional in character than those of the writers above-mentioned—but are exceedingly enjoyable for all that. The verses which follow on 'The Widow Malone' were once very popular; to the 'new generation' they may not be so perfectly familiar:

Did you hear of the Widow Malone
O hone!
Who lived in the town of Athlone
Alone?
O, she melted the hearts
Of the swains in them parts;

* Born 1797, died 1868. † Born 1809, died 1872.

So lovely the Widow Malone,
O hone!
So lovely the Widow Malone.

Of lovers she had a full score
Or more;
And fortunes they all had galore
In store;
From the minister down
To the clerk of the Crown,
All were courting the Widow Malone
O hone!
All were courting the Widow Malone.

But so modest was Mrs. Malone,
'Twas known,
That no one could see her alone,
O hone!
Let them ogle and sigh,
They could ne'er catch her eye;
So bashful the Widow Malone,
O hone!
So bashful the Widow Malone.

Till one Mister O'Brien from Clare,
How quare!
'Tis little for blushing they care
Down there;
Put his arm round her waist,
Gave ten kisses at laste,
And says he, 'You're my Molly Malone,
My own.'
Says he, 'You're my Molly Malone.'

And the widow they all thought so shy—
My eye!
Never thought of a simper or sigh;
For why?

'O, Lucius,' said she,
'Since you've now made so free,
You may marry your Mary Malone,
Your own;
You may marry your Mary Malone.'

There's a moral contained in my song,
Not wrong;
And one comfort it's not very long,
But strong:—
If for widows you die,
Learn to kiss—not to sigh,
For they're all like sweet Mistress Malone!
O hone!
O they're all like sweet Mistress Malone!

CHAPTER X.

LIVING WRITERS.

The Wit and Humour of the Day—Alfred Tennyson—'Will Waterproof's Monologue'—'The New Timon and the Poets'—Robert Browning—'Mr. Sludge, the Medium'—Robert Lord Lytton—'Philosophy of the Little'—'The Carp's Advice'—George Meredith—'The Beggar's Soliloquy'—Gerald Massey—'The Two Napoleons'—Philip James Bailey—'The Crow'—John Stuart Blackie—'Song of Good Greeks'—'Concerning I and Non-I'—Robert Buchanan—'Session of the Poets'—Earl of Southesk—'Jonas Fisher'—'False Love's Quirk'—Alfred Austin—'The Season'—William John Courthope—'Paradise of Birds'—George Otto Trevelyan—'Ladies in Parliament'—Frederick Locker—'A Terrible Infant'—'Mabel'—Mottoes—Austin Dobson—'Tu Quoque'—'Amari aliquid'—James Robinson Planché—'I'm in such a flutter'—H. J. Byron and W. S. Gilbert contrasted—W. S. Gilbert—'Trial by Jury'—'H.M.S. Pinafore'—F. C. Burnand—'His Heart was true to Poll'—Robert Reece—'The Rejected Tutor'—H. S. Leigh—'Only Seven'—H. Savile Clarke—'A Billiard Lesson'—J. Ashby Sterry—'A Nutshell Novel'—William Sawyer—A Parody—Edmund Yates—'All Saints'—George John Cayley—Epigrams—Lewis Carroll—'Jabberwocky'—Edmund Lear—H. Cholmondeley Pennell—'How the Daughters go down at Dunoon'—Walter Parke—'A Vague Story'—Matthew Browne—'Lilliput Land'—'A Didactic Ode'—Charles Stuart Calverley—The Apostle of Persiflage.

CHAPTER X.

LIVING WRITERS.

THE last quarter of a century or so, which has been prolific in so many forms of literature, has been singularly fertile in the poetry of wit and humour. We may not have a Thomas Hood among us, to scatter puns as plentifully as other men distribute syllables; nor have we a Lord Byron to write a new *Don Juan* in a vein of persiflage which no one shall surpass. It is the characteristic of our time that whereas we have few writers of supreme power of genius, we have a crowd of authors each of whom is worthy (as was once said of a certain Scotchman) of a niche in the Temple of Fame. So, in witty and humorous verse, we have a number of claimants to attention. On the one hand, we have again a certain class of writers who, though their reputation has been chiefly earned in other fields, have yet had time and opportunity occasionally to cultivate the comic muse. On the other, we have professed satirists, like Mr. Alfred Austin; comic dramatists, such as Messrs. Planché, Byron, Gilbert, Burnand, Farnie, Leigh, Clarke, and Reece; reproducers of the old Greek comedy, like Messrs. Courthope and Trevelyan; nonsense-writers (in the best sense of the term) such as Messrs. 'Lewis Carroll,' Lear, and Cholmondeley Pennell; poets of pure persiflage, like Mr. Calverley; poets of 'society,' like Messrs. Locker and Dobson; occasional versifiers, such as Messrs. Ashby Sterry, Sawyer, Yates; and political and social squib-writers, like those of the *Pall Mall Gazette* and other newspapers. Here is variety such as is rarely seen, and here too will be found entertainment of a sterling kind, some of it of a nature quite peculiar to the present time. We refer especially to such work as the fairy extravaganzas of Mr. Gilbert, the

persiflage of Mr. Calverley, and the nonsense-verses of Messrs. Lear and Carroll.

To begin, however, with the poets who are not primarily humorous or witty, let us glance for a moment through the works of Mr. Tennyson, and note what contributions he has made to the poetry of wit and humour. This side of his genius is too often either forgotten or ignored. By some it is altogether denied. Nor is it necessary to go so far as to assert that Mr. Tennyson is a wit and a humourist. He is not so specially, but he certainly has wit, and he certainly has humour. That he has the one, you have only to read 'Will Waterproof's Monologue' to discover for yourself:

The Muse, the jolly Muse it is!
  She answered to my call,
She changes with that mood or this,
  Is all-in-all to all.
She lit the spark within my throat,
  To make the blood run quicker,
Used all her fiery will, and smote
  Her life into the liquor.

And hence this halo lives about
  The waiter's hands, that reach
To each his perfect pint of stout,
  His proper chop to each.
He looks not like the common breed
  That with the napkin dally—
I think he came, like Ganymede,
  From some delightful valley.

The cock was of a larger egg
  Than modern poultry drop,
Stept forward on a firmer leg,
  And crammed a plumper crop;
Upon an ampler dunghill trod,
  Crowed lustier late and early,
Sipt wine from silver, praising God,
  And robed in golden barley.

A private life was all his joy,
  Till in a court he saw
A something-pottle-bodied boy
  That knuckled at the taw:
He stooped and clutched him, fair and good,
  Flew over roof and casement:
His brothers of the weather stood
  Stock-still in sheer amazement.

But he, by farmstead, thorpe, and spire,
  And followed with acclaims,
A sign to many a staring shire,
  Came crowing over Thames.
Right down by smoking Paul's they bore,
  Till, where the street grew straiter,
One fixed forever at the door,
  And one became head-waiter.

Elsewhere throughout his poetry there are many touches of a witty and a humorous kind. Is there not humour, for example, in the following description of 'The Miller:'

I see the wealthy miller yet,
  His double chin, his portly size,
And who that knew him could forget
  The busy wrinkles round his eyes?
The slow wise smile that, round about
  His dusty forehead dryly curled,
Seemed half-within and half-without,
  And full of dealings with the world.

Is there not wit, too, in the verse (occurring in 'The Day-Dream') which describes the Chancellor:

'Pardy,' returned the King, 'but still
  My joints are something stiff or so.
My lord, and shall we pass the bill
  I mentioned half an hour ago?'
The Chancellor, sedate and vain,
  In courteous words returned reply;
But dallied with his golden chain,
  And, smiling, put the question by.

We confess we do not see the fun in 'Amphion' or 'The Goose,' in which the intention seems to have been humorous, but Mr. Tennyson, like Brummell's valet, can afford to have his failures when he has such great successes as 'The Northern Farmers.' These poems are too familiar to require quotation, but it may be remarked how admirably the Laureate has distinguished the characters of the two men; the 'old style,' which prides itself upon having 'stubb'd Thornaby Waäste,' from the 'new style,' whose household god is 'proputty, proputty, proputty.' And, again, if there is any doubt about the Laureate's powers of sarcasm, let us extract (albeit the verses are 'suppressed') the following lines from 'The New Timon and the Poets,' contributed to *Punch* in 1846.* They are so clever, and indicate such interesting possibilities in Mr. Tennyson, that we hope we may be forgiven for their partial reproduction:

. . . What, it's you,
The padded man, that wears the stays—

Who killed the girls and thrilled the boys
With dandy pathos when you wrote!
A lion, you, that made a noise,
And shook a mane *en papillotes!* . . .

But men of long-enduring hopes,
And careless what this hour may bring,
Can pardon little would-be Popes
And Brummels, when they try to sting. . . .

What profits now to understand
The merits of a spotless shirt—
A dapper boot—a little hand—
If half the little soul is dirt?

You talk of tinsel! why we see
The old mark of rouge upon your cheeks.
You prate of Nature! you are he
That spilt his life about the cliques.

* The late Lord Lytton, who in his youth was something of an exquisite, had attacked Mr. Tennyson in his poem, *The New Timon*, as 'School-Miss Alfred,' 'out-babying Wordsworth and out-glittering Keats.'

A Timon you! Nay, nay, for shame;
It looks too arrogant a jest—
The fierce old man—to take *his* name—
You bandbox. Off, and let him rest.

There is yet another passage in Mr. Tennyson's works which would seem to show that he possesses strong satiric power, if he only cared to use it. We refer to the lines in 'Sea Dreams,' where, professing to quote from an 'old satire,' he thus describes a religious hypocrite:

With all his conscience and one eye askew,
So false, he partly took himself for true;
Whose pious talk, when most his heart was dry,
Made wet the crafty crowsfoot round his eye;
Who, never naming God except for gain,
So never took that useful name in vain;
Made Him his catspaw and the Cross his tool,
And Christ the bait to trap his dupe and fool;
Nor deeds of gift, but deeds of grace he forged,
And snake-like slimed his victim ere he gorged;
And oft at Bible meetings, o'er the rest
Arising, did his holy oily best,
Dropping the too rough H in Hell and Heaven,
To spread the Word by which himself had thriven.

Evidently the man who wrote this could write more if he would; and if he does not, we have the reason, doubtless, in the lines which follow:

He had never kindly heart,
Nor ever cared to better his own kind,
Who first wrote satire with no pity in it.

No one, we suppose, disputes the claim of Mr. Browning to the possession, if not of wit, at least of humour. It so happens that one of his compositions, admittedly humorous in character, has long been a favourite with the public. We mean the story of 'The Pied Piper of Hamelin,' which shows Mr. Browning in a playful mood. His best productions in this vein, however, are rather of the grim than of the lively kind, and cut deep into the husk of

hypocrisy and lust in which poor human nature lies embedded.

Not a bad example of Mr. Browning's style is 'Mr. Sludge, "the Medium,"' in which, after the poet's usual and favourite manner, the impostor is made to tell the story of his own imposture. At one point he describes the attitude of an ordinary audience towards a 'spiritualistic' *séance:*

Here's your circle, now;
Two-thirds of them, with heads like you, their host,
Turn up their eyes, and cry, as you expect,
'Lord, who'd have thought it?' But there's always one
Looks wise, compassionately smiles, submits
'Of your veracity no kind of doubt;
But—do you feel so certain of the boy's?
Really, I wonder! I confess myself
More chary of my faith!' That's galling, sir.
What, he the investigator, he the sage,
When all's done? Then, you just have shut your eyes,
Opened your mouth, and gulped down David whole.
You! Terrible were such catastrophe!
So, evidence is redoubled, doubled again,
And doubled besides; once more, 'He heard, we heard,
You and they heard, your mother and your wife,
Your children, and the stranger in your gates:
Did they or did they not?' So much for him,
The black sheep, guest without the wedding-garb,
And doubting Thomas! Now's your turn to crow:
'He's kind to think you such a fool: Sludge cheats?
Leave you alone to take precautions!' Straight
The rest join chorus. Thomas stands abashed.

Throughout the cynical analysis is of the acute and penetrating character to which Mr. Browning has accustomed us, and for which, rather than for pure wit or for pure humour, he is justly celebrated.

Something akin in character to Mr. Browning's work is that of Lord Lytton and Mr. Meredith, both of whom have written humorous pieces, the key-note struck in which is satiric, not to say sardonic, in its tone. Both are didactic

in their general tendency, Lord Lytton especially aiming at the moral elevation of the reader, chiefly by exposing the inevitable meannesses of human nature. Thus, in the fable of the fleas—one of whom lives upon an ape, and is constantly in danger of being scratched to death, whilst the other lives upon a lion, who cannot or does not care to get at him—we have this moral, which the author calls 'The Philosophy of the Little:'

> Apes scratch themselves at each itching fit,
> And in public pick out their private fleas,
> Not resenting disgust if they get but ease.
> Thine own insignificance prudently trust.
> A lion bears nobly what nobleness must. . . .
> From a world of foes wouldst thou live exempt?
> Then shelter thyself in the world's contempt;
> 'Tis a fortune subscribed by all creatures for thee.
> Go trade on it! safe—if thou art but a flea!

Equally cynical is the conclusion of the fable, 'De Profundis,' in which 'an old fat carp, with belly cool, couched in calm mud,' warns the tench against its wish for wings by which to ascend into the light. This is 'The Carp's Advice:'

> 'Keep thou the bottom of the pond. Even that
> With cause for caution (curse the pike!) is rife.
> Fatten thyself, not others; to grow fat
> Is the fit end of life.'

> Sage was the counsel of the Carp. And yet
> Himself soon after (for the time was Lent),
> Being too lazy to escape the net,
> Was in it caught, and went

> To fatten the plump prior. The same dish
> Held the small tench. And him the Sacristan
> Crammed his lean crop with. Sage or simple, fish
> Came to the frying-pan.

Of Mr. Meredith's manner no better specimen could be given than these verses from 'The Beggar's Soliloquy:'

Now, this, to my notion, is pleasant cheer,
  To lie alone on a ragged heath,
Where your nose isn't sniffing for bones or beer,
  But a peat-fire smells like a garden beneath.
The cottagers bustle about the door,
  And the girl at the window ties her strings.
She's a dish for a man who's a mind to be poor;
  Lord! women are such expensive things.

We don't marry beggars, said she: why, no:
  It seems that to make 'em is what you do;
And as I can cook, and scour, and sew,
  I needn't pay half my victuals for you.
A man for himself should be able to scratch,
  But tickling's a luxury:—love, indeed!
Love burns as long as a lucifer-match,
  Wedlock's the candle! Now, that's my creed.

The church-bells sound water-like over the wheat;
  And up the long path troop pair after pair.
The man's well brushed, and the woman looks neat:
  It's man and woman everywhere!
Unless, like me, you lie here flat,
  With a donkey for friend, you must have a wife:
She pulls out your hair, but she brushes your hat.
  Appearances make the best half of life. . . .

I'm not a low Radical, hating the laws,
  Who'd the aristocracy rebuke.
I talk o' the Lord Mayor o' London because
  I once was on intimate terms with his cook.
I served him a turn, and got pensioned on scraps,
  And, Lord, sir! didn't I envy his place,
Till Death knocked him down with the softest of taps,
  And I knew what was meant by a tallowy face!

On the contrary, I'm a Conservative quite;
  There's beggars in Scripture, 'mongst Gentiles and Jews:
It's nonsense trying to set things right,
  For if people will give, why, who'll refuse?

That stopping old custom wakes my spleen:
The poor and the rich both in giving agree;
Your tight-fisted shopman's the Radical mean:
There's nothing in common 'twixt him and me.

He says I'm no use! but I won't reply,
You're lucky not being of use to him!
On week-days he's playing at spider and fly,
And on Sundays he sings about Cherubim!
Nailing shillings to counters is his chief work;
He nods now and then at the name on his door:
But judge of us two at a bow and a smirk;
I think I'm his match; and I'm honest—that's more.

Here the desire to reform through satire is very obvious, and ranks Mr. Meredith among the 'earnest' humourists. The style is certainly Browningesque, but the piece has a *cachet* about it of Mr. Meredith's own.

Among the grimly humorous of living poets must be ranked Mr. Gerald Massey, who has written, among other things, a crushing comparison between the first and third Napoleons:

One shook the world with earthquake. Like a fiend
He sprang exultant—all hell following after!
The other, in burst of bubble and whiff of wind,
Shook the world too—with laughter!

The one outwearied winged Victory—
So swift he went, his spirit would outfly her;
The other wore her out by waiting, he
So failed to keep up by her!

One bitted France like some wild beast, and when
He had mounted, reined, and rode until he tamed it,
The other threw it down by stealth, and then
Most infamously maimed it.

The first at least a splendid meteor shone!
The second fizzed, and falls an aimless rocket;
Kingdoms were pocketed for France by one,
The other picked her pocket.

There are five other verses, but they are in rather a more serious vein than the above, which we give but as a sample of the writer's work in this way. His work in other directions would, of course, demand more notice.

Mr. P. J. Bailey comes within the range of comic poets by reason of his well-known song, 'The Crow,' which figures in that very remarkable production, *Festus*. The song is familiar, and yet has been rarely printed—apart, that is, from the long poem in which it is included. Some portions of it are indeed felicitous:

The crow—the crow! the great black crow!
He loves the fat meadow—his taste is low;
He loves the fat worms, and he dines in a row
With fifty-five cousins all black as a sloe;
Sloe—sloe! you great black crow!
But it's jolly to fare like a great black crow!

The crow—the crow! the great black crow!
He never gets drunk on the rain or snow;
He never gets drunk, but he never says no
If you press him to tipple ever so.
So—so! you great black crow!
It's an honour to soak like a great black crow!

The crow—the crow! the great black crow!
He lives for a hundred year and mo';
He lives till he dies, and he dies as slow
As the morning mists down the hills that go.
Go—go! you great black crow!
But it's fine to live and die like a great black crow!

We are not aware that Mr. Bailey has written anything farther in this amusing vein. The general complexion of his poetry is of a very different character, and the above is certainly about the last thing one would have expected to discover in the midst of so much that is ethereal and shadowy.

Some humorous portraiture of the bucolic kind will be found in the Rev. William Barnes's *Poems in the Dorsetshire Dialect*, and there are passages in Mr. Patmore's *Angel in*

the House which, if they do not sparkle, at least gleam a little with fun of a decorous, mild kind.

There is more scope for quotation in the little volume of *Musa Burschicosa*, published by Professor Blackie, who has at least the art of writing lively students' songs, and of informing them with his own peculiarities of thought and style. For example:

. . . Of all the thoughtful sons of Time
The Greeks were wisest, that's clear;
The Germans preach a lore sublime,
But it smells of tobacco and beer;
And this I declare to you all,
Though Kant and such fellows
Know something, they tell us,
They never will do
To tie the shoe
Of Plato, Peter, and Paul.

Some think that man from a monkey grew
By steps of long generation,
When, after many blunders, a few
Good hits were made in creation;
But I can't comprehend this at all;
Of blind-groping forces
Though Darwin discourses,
I rather incline
To believe in design,
With Plato and Peter and Paul.

There's one Thomas Buckle, a London youth.
Who taught that the world was blind,
Till he was born to proclaim the truth
That matter is moulder of mind;
But I really can't fancy at all
How wheat, rice, and barley,
Made Dick, Tom, and Charley,
So tidy and trim,
Without help from Him
Who was preached both by Plato and Paul.

There's one John Bright, a Manchester man,
Who taught the Tories to rule,
By setting their stamp on his patent plan
For renewing the health of John Bull;
But I say it won't do at all;
To seek for salvation
By mere enumeration
Of polls would surprise,
If they were to rise,
Not a little both Plato and Paul.

Another excellent lyric from the Professor's pen is that 'Concerning I and Non-I,'—'a metaphysical song.' This is the point of it:

Now brim your glass, and plant it well
Beneath your nose on the table,
And you will find what philosophers tell
Of I and non-I is no fable.
Now listen to wisdom, my son!
Myself am the subject,
This wine is the object:
These things are two;
But I'll prove to you
That subject and object are one.

I take this glass in my hand, and stand
Upon my legs, if I can,
And look and smile, benign and bland,
And feel that I am a man.
Now stretch all the strength of your brains!
I drink—and the object
Is lost in the subject;
Making one entity
In the identity
Of me and the wine in my veins!

Now that Lord Neaves is gone, Professor Blackie may be said to be our only academic song-writer; and long may he be spared to try modern theories, of whatever kind, by the test of classical culture!

In the acknowledged works of Mr. Robert Buchanan will be found many specimens of poetic wit and humour. He has written English and Scotch Eclogues, in which the spirit of satire is happily exercised, generally in the direction of exposing hypocrisy and bigotry. His companion sketches, 'The Wake of O'Connor' and 'The Wedding of Shon Maclean,' are full of movement and rollicking vitality, recalling, in the flow of the verse and the ease of the rhymes, the somewhat similarly-constructed work of R. H. Barham. Perhaps, however, the cleverest thing he ever wrote in this line was 'The Session of the Poets,' a series of contemporary portraits, which he contributed to *The Spectator* in 1866. This, for felicity of characterisation, as well as for ingenuity of motive, is well worthy to rank with the poems by Suckling, Sheffield, and Leigh Hunt, of which it is undisguisedly an imitation. It is not acknowledged by its author, but is well known to be the work of Mr. Buchanan, who has taken the edge off all possible offence by introducing himself into the sketch. We give some of the best portions:

At the Session of Poets, held lately in London,
  The Bard of Freshwater was voted the chair,
With his tresses unbrush'd, and his shirt-collar undone,
  He loll'd at his ease like a good-humour'd bear;
'Come, boys!' he exclaim'd, 'we'll be merry together,'
  And lit up his pipe with a smile on his cheek;
While with eye like a skipper's cock'd up at the weather,
  Sat Vice-Chairman Browning, thinking in Greek.* . .

Right stately sat Arnold,† his black gown adjusted
  Genteelly, his Rhine wine deliciously iced,
With puddingish England serenely disgusted,
  And looking in vain (in the mirror) for 'Geist;'
He hearkʼd to the Chairman, with 'Surely!' and 'Really?'
  Aghast at both collar and cutty of clay;
Then felt in his pocket, and breath'd again freely,
  On touching the leaves of his own classic play.‡

* Mr. Browning's intimate knowledge of the Greek language and literature is a matter of notoriety. † Mr. Matthew Arnold.
‡ *Merope*, published in 1858, is now out of print.

Close at hand linger'd Lytton,* whose Icarus winglets
Had often betray'd him in regions of rhyme;
How glitter'd the eye underneath his gray ringlets,
A hunger within it unlessen'd by time!
Remoter sat Bailey—satirical, surly—
Who studied the language of Goethe too soon,
And sang himself hoarse to the stars very early,
And crack'd a weak voice with too lofty a tune. . . .

There sat—looking moody, conceited, and narrow—
Buchanan, who, finding, when foolish and young,
Apollo asleep on a coster-girl's barrow,
Straight dragged him away to see somebody hung.

What was said, what was done? was there prosing or rhyming?
Was nothing noteworthy in deed or in word?
Why, just as the hour of supper was chiming,
The only event of the evening occurred.
Up jumped, with his neck stretching out like a gander,
Master Swinburne, and squeal'd, glaring out thro' his hair,
'All virtue is bosh! Hallelujah for Landor!
I disbelieve wholly in everything! There!'

With language so awful he dared then to treat 'em,
Miss Ingelow fainted in Tennyson's arms;
Poor Arnold rush'd out, crying, 'Sœcl' inficetum!'
And great bards and small bards were full of alarms.
Till Tennyson, flaming and red as a gipsy,
Struck his fist on the table and utter'd a shout;
'To the door with the boy! call a cab! He is tipsy!'
And they carried the naughty young gentleman out.

Since this was written Mr. Buchanan has produced a work, the whole tendency of which is satire; we mean the book *St. Abe and his Wives*, which we believe the writer has acknowledged. It was originally published anonymously, and was freely attributed to American writers. It is a

* The late, not the present, lord. The late lord's anxiety to secure a poetical reputation was keen, but, unfortunately, unfulfilled.

scathing *exposé* of Mormon life and teaching, and ranks among the most effective bits of humorous work of which the last half century can boast. The satire is not, however, statedly intentional, and comes out only under the skilful handling of the poet.

With the *St. Abe* of Mr. Buchanan may be ranked not inaptly the *Jonas Fisher* of the Earl of Southesk, a poem which, at the time of its publication, excited considerable attention, and still remains interesting as the comment of an earnest mind upon the weak points in modern British civilisation. It is not strictly a satire either in form or in intention; but it has passages in which the strong feeling of the writer expresses itself in a strain of quasi-sarcasm, the style of verse adopted giving to the opinions and arguments a sort of Hudibrastic flavour. The subject-matter of the poem ranges from Roman Catholicism to the Deceased Wife's Sister question, and is treated chiefly in conversations between Jonas Fisher and a certain Mr. Grace, who is really the hero of the poem. This is what the latter has to say upon the topic of Believing Grace:

'Take yon mean crawling shopkeeper,
Whose heart is set on sordid pelf;
He cheats as freely as he dares,
He cares for no one but himself:

'Yet, if the fellow has a turn
To help some holy sect along,
And use the jargon of their creed,
And pray their prayer, and sing their song,

'No matter though he live and move
In lying, cheating, bribery—
"He has his frailties, sir, yet still,
A dear, believing brother he!"

'Now take yon honest, brave old man—
A Navy Captain he has been,
Who loves, and is beloved by all,
Serves God as once he served his Queen;

'Reads in the prayer-book every day,
And every Sunday goes to church;
Gives freely of his scanty means,
And ne'er from honour makes a lurch:

'Is he "converted"? Heaven forbid!
A "dear believer"? Blight the thought!
The sinner sometimes lets an oath
Escape: so Christ for him is naught.'

'I think,' said I, 'I see the cause
That made such special rules begin;
One needs a set of outward signs
To show what people are within.' . . .

'Quite so,' said Mr. Grace: 'I wish
That these same rules still further went,
And people showed their want of heart
By forms of dress. One might invent

'Such niceties of cut and style,
Of button, pocket, pattern, hue,
That not a change within our souls
But all the world would know it too.

'The rule already works: his slate
A Quaker partly thus denotes.
Besides, one seldom ever sees
Believers in short shooting-coats.'

In Lord Southesk's second volume, *Greenwood's Farewell, and other Poems*, will be found several humorous pieces of a satiric kind, notably that called 'Pyworne and Dixie,' written in much the same vein as *Jonas Fisher*. As a specimen of his lighter trifles, take the verses, 'False Love's Quirk:'

'O sweet one!' sighs the lover,
'Could I but this discover,—
Thy breast so softly moving,
Will it ever cease from loving?'

Says she, her eyes upturning,
'The love within me burning
No time can ever smother'—
For some one or another!

We come now to a poem which, unlike *St. Abe* and *Jonas Fisher*, is statedly 'a satire,' and follows the example set by Dryden, Pope, and Byron in the adoption of the now unfashionable heroic couplet. We refer to *The Season* of Mr. Alfred Austin, the latest, and apparently the last, of the purely Juvenalian diatribes. Something of the same kind was attempted by Mr. Richard Crawley in reference to the poetry of the day,* but the effort cannot be regarded as successful. The writer exhibited smartness here and there—as when he called up visions of the time

When Swinburne only lusted after tarts,

and where he described the Broad Church party as

That medley of St. Paul and St. Voltaire;

but the poem, as a whole, lacked pungency of thought and incisiveness of expression, the author showing far too great a disposition to eke out a flaccid text with flabby notes. Of a very different calibre is Mr. Austin's poem, in which the vices and follies of fashionable life and people are lashed at once with indignation and with force. There had been nothing quite so strongly marked since Byron's *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, and nothing has been published since of equal ability and trenchancy except *The Golden Age* of the same writer. The latter poem appeared in 1871; the first edition of *The Season* was produced in 1861. It is, however, from the third edition (revised and enlarged) of 1869 that we quote the following description of an Opera-night:

But—the clock strikes; the carriage waits; be trite.
Pacchini dances, Titiens sings, to-night.
Sure, you mistake? for Lumley promise made
Of voice not heard, limbs never yet displayed.
Better and better. Sharp's the word. The tier?
The first, of course—the best for eye and ear.
Gods! what a show! Right, left, the house is crammed:
Our new *danseuse* won't here, at least, be damned.
Above, around, below, are houris' eyes,
Flashing with quick intelligent surprise,

* See his *Horse and Foot, or Pilgrims to Parnassus.*

And houris' blushes rapidly respond
To murmurous whispers deftly dropped and fond. . . .
Their rounded, pliant, silent-straying arms
Seem sent to guard, yet manifest their charms.
Mark how the lorgnettes cautiously they raise
Lest points, no pose so thoughtless but displays,
A too quick curiosity should hide—
For they who gaze must gazed at be beside.
Now, o'er the box their beauteous busts they bend,
A foe to welcome, criticise a friend,
Unfolding or obscuring charms at will
With all the calm unconsciousness of skill,
Solving the doubt that sometimes will arise—
Whilst women wantons are, can men be wise?
Let your eyes stray from sensuous row to row
Of nude parade, and flash an honest no!
What can be Man's, the while 'tis Woman's part
To bare her bosom and to hide her heart?

Further on we come to this picture of a modern ballroom:

Botanic Shows, where crowds and cactus tear
Too yielding daughters from a mother's chair:
Water excursions, where full boats divide
Some pretty novice from a sister's side;
Or garden fêtes, where skilled duennas lose
Some precious charge that with like skill pursues;
To these be honour; but the Ball—the Ball—
Combines, continues, and excels them all.
Here, with complacency, strict matrons see
Maids and moss-troopers polking knee to knee.
Their kindly gaze examines and exalts
The closer contact of the chaster waltz.
Look where they smile, the gray-haired guardians, set
To scout decorum, sanction etiquette.
Louder, ye viols! shrilly, cornets, blow!
Who is this prophet that denounces woe?
Whirl fast! whirl long! ye gallants and ye girls!
Cling closer still; dance down those cursëd churls.

Be crown'd, ye fair, with poppies newly-blown,
Fling loose your tresses and relax your zone!
From floating gauze let dreamy perfumes rise,
Infuse a fiercer fervour in your eyes!
Till, head and heart and senses all on fire,
Passion presume, and Modesty expire!

Bless us and save us! What tirade is this?
My choleric friend! is anything amiss?
This sparkling scene of Beauty in its bloom
Is not an Orgy, but—an Auction-Room.
These panting damsels, dancing for their lives,
Are only maidens waltzing into wives.
These smiling matrons are appraisers sly,
Who regulate the dance, the squeeze, the sigh,
And each base cheapening buyer having bid,
Knock down their daughters to the noblest bid.

In another place Mr. Austin satirises the

Unmarketable maidens of the mart,
Who, plumpness gone, fine delicacy feint,
And hide their sins in piety and paint;

whilst in another he celebrates

Those gardens where the leafy glade
Prompts the proposal dalliance delayed;
Where tear-dewed lid, choked utterance, sobs suppressed,
Tear the confession from a doubting breast;
Whence they, who vainly haunted rout and ride,
Emerge triumphant from a suitor's side.

The satirist is sometimes franker in his observations than we are accustomed to in these demure days; but his freedom of utterance, though it be unusual, is calculated to effect some good in the direction of opening the public's eyes to certain of our more glaring public evils. It is certainly curious that Mr. Austin should be the only living writer who has attempted satire in this form. The heroic couplet has done good service in our literature, but it can scarcely be described as superannuated, and, though a veteran, has vigour yet.

Perhaps it is that indignation is giving way to a feeling of placid toleration, or perhaps our satirists prefer to smile whilst they condemn—to throw away the sabre in favour of the rapier, and 'run through' in place of 'cutting down.' Whilst satire is discountenanced, persiflage obtains in favour, and certain of our ablest wits and humourists prefer to adopt the mode of Aristophanes and Horace rather than the tone of Juvenal and Persius. We have seen how Mortimer Collins went to the Greek for the notion of his *British Birds*. In the same way Mr. Courthope has gone to the Greek for the conception of his *Ludibria Lunæ* and his *Paradise of Birds*. In the former of these he treats, with a great deal of graceful fancy, of the rights of women. The latter is more generally and more directly satirical, besides having greater variety of metre; some of the songs and choruses are very clever, both intrinsically and as imitations. Take for example the song in which the disappearance of things once prevalent is celebrated:

Let others rhyme the unborn time,
  I sing the Obsolete. . . .

I sing each race, whom we displace
  In their primeval woods,
While Gospel aid inspires free trade
  To traffic with their goods;
With Norman dukes the still Sioux
  In breeding might compete;
But where men talk the tomahawk
  Will soon grow Obsolete. . . .

Shall naught be said of theories dead?
  The Ptolemaic system?
Figure and phrase, that bent all ways
  Duns Scotus liked to twist 'em?
Averroes' thought? and what was taught
  In Salamanca's seat?
Sihons and Ogs? and showers of frogs?
  Sea-serpents Obsolete?

Pillion and pack have left their track;
  Dead is the 'Tally-ho.'
Steam rails cut down each festive crown
  Of the old world and slow.
Jack-in-the-Green no more is seen,
  Nor Maypole in the street;
No mummers play on Christmas-day;
  St. George is Obsolete.

But Mr. Courthope is not the only living writer who has gone to Aristophanes for his inspiration. Mr. G. O. Trevelyan went to him when, in 1866, he wrote and published the semi-political, semi-social squib, entitled *The Ladies in Parliament*, a composition overflowing with bright wit and hearty humour. Here, too, women's rights are the subject chiefly satirised, but a good deal of the writer's banter is turned against fashion generally and legislation in particular. The 'fragment' is in form amazingly like, and yet unlike, the old Athenian comedy, and bristles with long rolling choruses, in which the London men and things of twelve or thirteen years ago are celebrated with much comic gusto. Single lines and separate passages are frequently most happy, as, for example, the allusion to

Him whom men style Baron Houghton, but the gods
  call Dicky Milnes;

also the 'Second Lady's' description of a parliamentary novice:

She's rising now, and taking off her bonnet,
And probably will end by sitting on it.
For oft, as sad experiences teach,
The novice, trembling from his maiden speech,
Drops flustered in his place, and crushes flat
His innocent and all-unconscious hat.
And my poor husband spoiled an evening suit
By plumping down amidst a heap of fruit
Which some admiring friend, his thirst to quench,
Had peeled beside him on the Treasury Bench.

There is much that is amusing in Lady Matilda's pathetic

contrast between the young M.P.s of the past and of the present:

In the days when Pam retained the wheel
We knew the men with whom we had to deal.
Then sucking statesmen seldom failed in seeing
The final cause and import of their being.
They dressed, they drove a drag, nor sought to shirk
Their portion of the matrimonial work.
They flocked to rout and drum by tens and twelves,
Danced every dance, and left their cards themselves. . .
But now what fond regrets pervade my breast
To note a stripling from some lofty nest
Of bright historic fame, but lately fledged;
To no loved object, but the ballot, pledged; . . .
His one supreme intent, through woe and weal,
To hold by Gladstone, as *he* held by Peel; . . .
Scorned by his tailor; little apt to mind
Though fashion leave him half a year behind.
In social wiles unversed, a rumoured ball
Extracts from him no mild suggestive call:
Nor deigns he in the ranged quadrille to stand,
Unless to claim some fair constituent's hand
Or serve some party end; and, if by chance
On one of our dear girls he wastes a dance,
She hears him wonder, 'midst the figure's pause
How Coleridge will dispose of Heathcote's clause.

The great drawback to the eventual popularity of *The Ladies in Parliament* is the fleeting character of its allusions, some of which will be unintelligible a few years hence. The same objection applies to *Horace at the University of Athens*, a little extravaganza, the permanency of which is further jeopardised by the purely academic character of its witticisms. The fun of it can still, however, be appreciated. The hero of the piece is no other person than our old friend Flaccus, whose residence at Athens is a matter of history, and whose behaviour at Philippi is duly recorded by Mr. Trevelyan. Among the other persons introduced is our no less familiar acquaintance, Balbus:

'This is Balbus, cleverest of dabs
At losing pewters and at catching crabs.
As to his antecedents, you must look
In the first page of Henry's Latin Book.'
'Can this be Balbus, household word to all,
Whose earliest exploit was to build a wall?
Who, with a frankness that I'm sure must charm ye,
Declared it was all over with the army?
Can this be who feasted, as 'twas said,
The town at fifty sesterces a head?
But, while the thankless mob his bounty quaffed,
Historians add—that there were some who laughed.'

Among the best things in the extravaganza are the constantly recurring bits of parody. For example:

I make the butter fly, all in an hour;
I put aside the preserves and cold meats,
Telling my master his cream has turned sour,
Hiding his pickles, purloining his sweets.
I never languish for husband or dower;
I never sigh to see gyps at my feet;
I make the butter fly, all in an hour,
Taking it home for my Saturday treat.

We were fresh together:
I never can forget
How, in October weather,
On Parker's Piece we met;
Nor how in hall we paid so dear
For shapeless lumps of flesh,
And sized for cheese and college beer,
When you and I were fresh.

There is also a good travestie of the *Donec gratus eram tibi*, in the last verse of which, however, there are certain references which would require some lines of explanation. The *Cambridge Dionysia*, though in form a very close imitation of *The Wasps*, was written so far back as 1858, and is almost entirely unintelligible, so crowded is it with expressions that refer to undergraduate politics in that year.

We may add that in Mr. Trevelyan's *Competition Wallah* the reader will find several agreeable *jeux d'esprit*, notably a skilful modernisation of *Tu ne quæsieris finem.*

It will have been seen how largely Messrs. Courthope and Trevelyan touch upon social topics in their extravaganzas. For the poetry of 'Society' proper we must go, however, to Messrs. Frederick Locker and Austin Dobson, the former of whom first came before the world in 1857. In him Praed has had not only a successor, but a formidable rival, —a rival who in some respects excels his predecessor. The great defect of Praed's verse is his fondness for epigram and antithesis; there is also a certain stiffness in his measures. Mr. Locker, on the other hand, is remarkable for ease rather than for brilliancy, and for piquancy rather than for point. Whilst in Praed's productions there is apparent the result of effort, in Mr. Locker's there is every sign of facile fluency. The verse flows on as if it came running from the writer's brain. The wit is to all appearance quite spontaneous; the humour is naïve and almost unconscious. Let us give examples of them both. What, for instance, could be more airy and delicate than the following, called 'A Terrible Infant'?

I recollect a nurse call'd Ann,
  Who carried me about the grass,
And one fine day a fine young man
  Came up, and kiss'd the pretty lass:
She did not make the least objection!
        Thinks I, '*Aha!*
  When I can talk I'll tell mamma.'
—And that's my earliest recollection.

Then, as a specimen of the kindly humour which serves so admirably to grease the wheels of life, take these verses from the poem entitled 'An Old Buffer:'

'A knock-me-down sermon, and worthy of Birch,'
Says I to my wife, as we toddle from church.
'Convincing, indeed!' is the lady's remark;
'How logical, too, on the size of the Ark!'

Then Blossom cut in, without begging our pardons,
'Pa, was it as big as the 'Logical Gardens?'

'Miss Blossom,' says I, to my dearest of dearies,
'Papa disapproves of nonsensical queries;
The Ark was an Ark, and had people to build it;
Enough we are told Noah built it and fill'd it;
Mamma does not ask how he caught his opossums.'
—Said she, 'That remark is as foolish as Blossom's.'

Here, again, we see wit enlisted—though so skilfully as almost to hide the nature of its object—in the service of didactics:

. . . 'There's a present for you, sir!' Yes, thanks to her thrift,
My Pet has been able to buy me a gift;
And she slips in my hand, the delightfully sly thing,
A paper-weight form'd of a bronze lizard writhing.

'What a charming *cadeau!* and so truthfully moulded;
But perhaps you don't know, or deserve to be scolded,
That in casting this metal a live harmless lizard
Was cruelly tortured in ghost and in gizzard?'

'Po-oh,' says my lady, (she always says 'Pooh!'
When she's wilful, and does what she oughtn't to do!)
'Hofgarten protests they've no feeling, and so
It was only their *muscular movement*, you know!'

Thinks I (when I've said *Au revoir*, and depart—
A Comb in my pocket, a Weight at my heart),
And when wretched mendicants writhe, there's a notion
That begging is only a 'muscular motion.'

The following is perhaps one of the broadest forms in which Mr. Locker's delicate humour can be found:

She's jealous! Does it grieve me? No!
I'm glad to see my Mabel so,
Carina mia!
Poor Puss! that now and then she draws
Conclusions not without a cause,
Is my idea.

She loves, and I'm prepared to prove
That jealousy is kin to love
In constant women.
My jealous Pussy cut up rough
The day before I bought her muff
With sable trimming.

These tearful darlings think to quell us
By being so divinely jealous;
But I know better.
Hillo! Who's that? A damsel! Come,
I'll follow: no, I can't, for some
One else has met her.

What fun! He looks 'a lad of grace.'
She holds her muff to hide her face;
They kiss, the Sly Puss!
Hillo! Her muff, it's trimm'd with sable! . . .
It's like the muff I gave my Mabel! . . .
Goodl-o-rd, SHE'S MY PUSS!

Of that portion of Mr. Locker's poetry which has to do with Mayfair and Belgravia, a typical example may be found in these (extracted) lines upon 'St. James's Street:'

. . . A famous street! To yonder park
Young Churchill stole in class-time;
Come, gaze on fifty men of mark,
And then recall the past time.
The *plats* at White's, the play at *Crock's*,
The bumpers to Miss Gunning;
The *bonhomie* of Charlie Fox,
And Selwyn's ghastly funning.

The dear old street of clubs and cribs,
As north and south it stretches,
Still seems to smack of Rolliad squibs,
And Gillray's fiercer sketches;
The quaint old dress, the grand old style,
The *mots*, the racy stories;
The wine, the dice, the wit, the bile—
The hate of Whigs and Tories.

At dusk, when I am strolling there,
  Dim forms will rise around me;—
Lepel flits past me in her chair,
  And Congreve's airs astound me!
And once Nell Gwynne, a frail young sprite,
  Looked kindly when I met her;
I shook my head, perhaps,—but quite
  Forgot to quite forget her. . . .

Mr. Locker's volume—alas, that there should be but one of them!—is full of felicitous expressions like that contained in the last two lines quoted. Of these is that in 'My Neighbour Rose,' about

The pup, once eloquent of tail;

that in 'The Old Oak-tree at Hatfield Baoadoak,' which recalls to us the time when

Nymphs had bluer eyes than hose,—
England then measured men by blows,
  And measured time by candles;

that in 'An Old Muff,' which informs us how

Once Uncle went astray,
Smoked, joked, and swore away—
Sworn by he's now, by a
  Large congregation;

that in 'An Invitation to Rome,' which states as an established fact that

The Cockney met in Middlesex or Surrey
Is often cold, and always in a hurry;

that in 'The Jester's Plea,' which says that

Many are afraid of God—
  And more of *Mrs. Grundy*.

Mr. Locker does not even despise that humble but amusing form of wit and humour—punning. He tells us, in one place, of a certain lady, that he

Trembled once beneath her spell,
  Whose spelling was extremely so-so.

In another he says:

> Some ladies now make pretty songs,
> And some make pretty nurses;
> Some men are great at righting wrongs,—
> And some at writing verses.

And elsewhere:

> I'm told that virgins augur some
> Misfortune if their shoe-strings come
> To grief on Friday;
> And so did Di, and then her pride
> Decreed that shoe-strings so untied
> Are 'so untidy!'

We can only just refer to the airy charm of such delightful and such well-known lyrics as 'To My Grandmother,' 'My Mistress's Boots,' and 'A Nice Correspondent.' The fact is, *London Lyrics* is a mine of all that is most witty and most humorous and, withal, most delicate; not the less happy things within its covers being the pithy mottoes with which most of the *Lyrics* are endowed. Some of these are miracles of fun in brief. For instance:

> He dropt a tear on Susan's bier,
> He seemed a most despairing swain;
> But bluer sky brought newer tie,
> And—would he wish her back again?
> The moments fly, and when we die,
> Will Philly Thistletop complain?
> She'll cry and sigh, and—dry her eye,
> And let herself be woo'd again.

Again:

> He cannot be complete in aught
> Who is not humorously prone;
> A man without a funny thought
> Can hardly have a funny bone.

Mr. Austin Dobson has wit, but it is displayed in sharper and more clearly-cut proportions than Mr. Locker's; he has humour, but it is more restrained, more

measured, than the same quality in the London Lyrist. His style has more elasticity than Praed's and less freedom than Mr. Locker's; his work may altogether be described as something between that of the two other writers, possessing the best qualities of each, but not exhibiting either in exactly the same way or to the same extent. In other words, he is emphatically an original producer, and, though ranking with Praed and Mr. Locker, has a manner and a message of his own. He is a nineteenth-century Horace, with all his prototype's sense of style, and more, of course, than his prototype's culture and variety. At least, we imagine that if Horace were living now, and had to sing again his *Donec gratus*, he would sing it very much as Mr. Dobson does in his 'Tu Quoque: an Idyll in the Conservatory:'

NELLIE.

If I were you, when ladies at the play, sir,
  Beckon and nod a melodrama through,
I would not turn abstractedly away, sir,
  If I were you!

FRANK.

If I were you, when persons I affected
  Wait for three hours to take me down to Kew,
I would, at least, pretend I recollected,
  If I were you!

NELLIE.

If I were you, when ladies are so lavish,
  Sir, as to keep me every waltz but two,
I would not dance with *odious* Miss MacTavish,
  If I were you!

FRANK.

If I were you, who vow you cannot suffer
  Whiff of the best, the mildest 'honey-dew,'
I would not dance with smoke-consuming Puffer,
  If I were you!

NELLIE.

If I were you, I would not, sir, be bitter,
  Even to write the *Cynical Review*;—

FRANK.

No, I should doubtless find flirtation fitter,
If I were you!

NELLIE.

Really? you would? why, Frank, you're quite delightful,—
Hot as Othello, and as black of hue;
Borrow my fan: I would not look so *frightful*,
If I were you!

FRANK.

'It is the cause.' I mean your chaperon is
Bringing some well-curled juvenile. Adieu!
I shall retire. I'd spare the poor Adonis,
If I were you!

NELLIE.

Go, if you will. At once! And by express, sir!
Where shall it be? To China—or Peru?
Go. I should leave inquirers my address, sir,
If I were you!

FRANK.

No,—I remain. To stay and fight a duel
Seems, on the whole, the proper thing to do.
Ah, you are strong,—I would not, then, be cruel,
If I were you!

NELLIE.

One does not like one's feelings to be doubted,—

FRANK.

One does not like one's friends to misconstrue,—

NELLIE.

If I confess'd that I a wee bit pouted?—

FRANK.

I should admit that I was *piqué*, too.

NELLIE.

Ask me to dance. I'd say no more about it,
If I were you!

Both Mr. Dobson's books abound in testimonies to his loving and sympathetic study of the Venusian bard. Take, for proof, some of the verses he addresses 'To Q. H. F.' on the identity of human nature in B.C. 8 and A.D. 1880:

. . . Ours is so far-advanced an age!
Sensation tales, a classic stage,
Commodious villas!
We boast High Art, an Albert Hall,
Australian meat, and men who call
Their sires gorillas!
We have a thousand things, you see,
Not dreamt in your philosophy.

And yet, how strange! Our 'world,' to-day,
Tried in the scale, would scarce outweigh
Your Roman cronies;
Walk in the Park,—you'll seldom fail
To find a Sybaris on the rail
By Lydia's ponies;
Or hap on Barrus, wigged and stayed,
Ogling some unsuspecting maid.

The great Gargilius, then, behold!
His 'long-bow' hunting tales of old
Are now but duller;
Fair Neobule, too! Is not
One Hebrus here—from Aldershot?
Aha; you colour!
Be wise. There old Canidia sits;
No doubt she's tearing you to bits.

And, look! dyspeptic, brave, and kind,
Comes dear Mecænas, half behind
Terentia's skirting;
Here's Pyrrha, 'golden-haired' at will;
Prig Damasippus, preaching still;
Asterie flirting,—
Radiant, of course. We'll make her black,—
Ask her when Gyges' ship comes back. . . .

Thoroughly Horatian, too, in tone and manner is the piece called 'Outward Bound,' in which the perils of the eastward-going passenger are graphically celebrated:

. . . The terrors of the torrid zone,
The indiscriminate cyclone,
A man might parry;
But only faith or 'triple brass'
Can help the 'outward bound' to pass
Safe through that eastward-faring class
Who sail to marry.

For him fond mothers, stout and fair,
Ascend the tortuous cabin-stair,
Only to hold around his chair
Insidious sessions;
For him the eyes of daughters droop
Across the plate of handed soup,
Suggesting seats upon the poop,
And soft confessions.

Nor are these all his pains, or most.
Romancing captains cease to boast—
Loud majors leave their whist—to roast
The youthful griffin;
All, all with pleased persistence show
His fate,—'remote, unfriended, slow,'—
His 'melancholy' bungalow,
His lonely tiffin.

The wit here is too obvious to need insisting on, and the quality is even still more obvious in the lively repartee of 'A Dialogue from Plato:'

. . . 'You're reading Greek?' 'I am—and you?'
'O, mine's a mere romancer!'
'So Plato is.' 'Then read him—do;
And I'll read mine for answer.'

I read. 'My Plato (Plato, too,—
That wisdom thus should harden!)
Declares "blue eyes look doubly blue
Beneath a Dolly Varden."'

She smiled. 'My book in turn avers
(No author's name is stated)
That sometimes these Philosophers
Are sadly mistranslated.'

'But hear,—the next's in stronger style:
The Cynic School asserted
That two red lips which part and smile
May not be controverted!'

She smiled once more. 'My book, I find,
Observes some modern doctors
Would make the Cynics out a kind
Of album-verse concoctors.'

Then I: 'Why not? "Ephesian law,
No less than time's tradition,
Enjoined fair speech on all who saw
Diana's apparition."'

She blushed—this time. 'If Plato's page
No wiser precept teaches,
Then I'd renounce that doubtful sage,
And walk to Burnham Beeches.'

'Agreed,' I said, 'for Socrates
(I find he too is talking)
Thinks learning can't remain at ease
While Beauty goes a-walking.' . . .

This is full of ease and grace. There is something dainty, too, about this little 'triolet'—an old French form peculiarly well adapted for such playful ebullitions of the fancy—called 'Amari Aliquid:'

'Will you hear "All Alone"?'—
'No, I think I quite know it.'
'But you liked it, my Own?'—
'When I *was*—"all alone!"
Now that season has flown;
And besides—*I'm the Poet!*'—
'Will you hear "All Alone"?'—
'No, I think I *quite* know it.'

So much for specimens of Mr. Dobson's wit. Of his humour, there are two excellent examples in 'A Legacy'—an instance of the humour of surprise—and 'Ad Rosam,' in the latter of which we have one of the few puns of which the writer has been guilty:

> You snared me, Rose, with ribbons,
> Your rose-mouth made me thrall,
> Brief—briefer far than Gibbon's
> Was my 'Decline and Fall.'

There is humour, also, of the cynico-sarcastic kind in 'The Love-Letter.'

The comic dramatists of the day afford numerous opportunities for witty and humorous quotation. Head of the comic fraternity — by reason of seniority, if of nothing else—is Mr. J. R. Planché, the veteran writer of extravaganza and burlesque, who taught his contemporaries and successors how to be amusing without being coarse, and entertaining without being vulgar. They have not yet learned the lesson thoroughly, but his example still remains as bright as ever, and the memory of his graceful wit will always be kept green. As a specimen of his occasional efforts in the way of verse, take the following *jeu d'esprit*, the only drawback to which is the now inevitable obscurity of some of the allusions:

> I'm in such a flutter—I scarcely can utter
> The words to my tongue that come dancing—come dancing;
> I've had such a dream—it must certainly seem
> To incredulous ears like romancing—romancing.
> No doubt it was brought on by that Madame Warton,
> Who muddled me quite with her models—her models;
> Or Madame Tussaud, where I saw in a row
> Of all possible people the noddles—the noddles.
>
> I dreamt I was walking with Homer, and talking
> The very best Greek I was able—was able—
> When Guy Earl of Warwick, with Johnson and Garrick,
> Would dance a Scotch reel on the table—the table.

When Hannibal, rising, declared 'twas surprising
  That gentlemen made such a riot—a riot—
And sent in a bustle to beg Lord John Russell
  Would hasten and make them all quiet—all quiet.

He came, and found Cato at cribbage with Plato,
  And Zimmerman playing the fiddle—the fiddle;
And snatching a rapier from Admiral Napier,
  Ran Peter the Great through the middle—the middle.
Then up jump'd Alboni and looked at Belzoni,
  Who sat by her side like a mummy—a mummy;
But pious Æneas said, 'This mustn't be, as
  I never play whist with a dummy—a dummy!'

I'm almost perplext to say what I saw next,
  But I think it was Poniatowski—atowski—
Was driving Nell Gwynne with Commissioner Lin
  Over Waterloo Bridge in a drosky—a drosky.
When Sardanapalus, who thought fit to hail us,
  Remarked it was very cold weather—cold weather;
And flinging his jasey at Prince Esterhazy,
  They both began waltzing together—together.

The news was next spread that Queen Dido was dead,
  And Alderman Gibbs, in a huff, sir—a huff, sir—
Had seized Lola Montes at Fribourg and Pontet's
  For feeding her bull-dog with snuff, sir—with snuff, sir.
Whilst Bunn, in a hurry, ran off to the Surrey
  To clap Abd-el-Kader in irons—in irons;
And engaged Julius Cæsar to play Adalgisa
  To Widdicomb's Lady of Lyons—of Lyons.

I caught up a candle and whispered to Handel,
  'There must be an end of the matter—the matter;'
When bang through the skylight came down upon my light
  Lord Brougham with a deuce of a clatter—a clatter.
In terror I woke, crying, 'This is a joke,'
  And jump'd smack out of bed like King Priam—King
    Priam;

And I've but to remark—if you're still in the dark,
Why, you're not a bit worse off than I am—than I am.

How happily voluble is this! and how clever, again, is the writer's description of the 'Literary Squabble,' which arose some years ago on the question of the pronunciation of Lord Houghton's name! This clever skit has frequently been attributed to other writers—among them, we believe, to Lord Palmerston, of all people. It is, however, Mr. Planché's. So, too, is the well-known answer of John Brown to 'The Poor Man's Philosophy.' Some of Mr. Planché's prologues are inimitable, and in their easy mirth and graceful piquancy are models for the study of less skilful and less tasteful workmen.

It would be difficult for any one, it would be quite impossible for the present writer, to say whether, after Mr. Planché, Mr. Byron or Mr. Gilbert ought to come first in the list of comic dramatists. Both are exceedingly popular, both are exceedingly voluminous, both have earned titles to remembrance by reason of unique and perfect work. If Mr. Byron has written the typical comedies of the time, and will go down to posterity as the author of *Cyril's Success* and of *Our Boys*, Mr. Gilbert has invented, in such plays as *Pygmalion and Galatea* and *The Palace of Truth*, a species of dramatic composition peculiar to the time, and, we should say, perennially interesting. Moreover, Mr. Byron has written the typical burlesques of to-day, and Mr. Gilbert the typical comic operas and cantatas. The one has given us *The Maid and the Magpie* and *Little Dr. Faust;* the other has given us *The Sorcerer* and *Trial by Jury*. They differ, however, in their style and motives. Mr. Byron, in all he does, keeps a firm hold of the realities of existence, and works upon the material afforded him by human nature. He is the Apostle of Fun. Mr. Gilbert, on the other hand, delights in unusual combinations, and either turns the world topsy-turvy or imagines a new world of his own. He is the Apostle of Cynicism. The one makes us laugh heartily and joyously, the other makes us laugh uneasily and restrainedly.

These are the general characteristics of their work. There are occasions, however, on which Mr. Gilbert is intentionally and outrageously funny, and nothing else. His *Bab Ballads* brim over with fun; his *Trial by Jury* is mirth-provoking from beginning to end. It is not wholly devoid of cynicism;—Mr. Gilbert can never wholly throw off the cynic in his stage productions;—but it is exceedingly comic for all that. Let us quote in proof of it 'The Judge's Song:'

When I, good friends, was called to the bar,
  I'd an appetite fresh and hearty,
But I was, as many young barristers are,
  An impecunious party.
I'd a swallow-tail coat of a beautiful blue—
  A brief which I bought of a booby—
A couple of shirts and a collar or two,
  And a ring that looked like a ruby!

Chorus.

A couple of shirts and a collar or two,
  And a ring that looked like a ruby.

In Westminster Hall I danced a dance,
  Like a semi-despondent fury;
For I thought I should never hit on a chance
  Of addressing a British jury;
But I soon got tired of third-class journeys,
  And dinners of bread and water;
So I fell in love with a rich attorney's
  Elderly ugly daughter.

Chorus.

So he fell in love with a rich attorney's
  Elderly ugly daughter.

The rich attorney he jumped with joy,
  And replied to my fond professions:
'You shall reap the reward of your pluck, my boy,
  At the Bailey and Middlesex Sessions.
You'll soon get used to her looks,' said he,
  'And a very nice girl you'll find her!

She may very well pass for forty-three
In the dusk, with the light behind her!'

Chorus.

She may very well pass for forty-three
In the dusk, with the light behind her.

The rich attorney was good as his word,
And briefs came trooping gaily,
And every day my voice was heard
At the Sessions or Ancient Bailey.
All thieves who could my fees afford
Relied on my orations,
And many a burglar I've restored
To his friends and his relations.

Chorus.

And many a burglar he's restored
To his friends and his relations.

At length I became as rich as the Gurneys—
An incubus then I thought her,
So I threw over that rich attorney's
Elderly ugly daughter.
The rich attorney my character high
Tried vainly to disparage—
And now, if you please, I'm ready to try
This breach of promise of marriage!

Chorus.

And now, if you please, he's ready to try
This breach of promise of marriage.

It would be easy to multiply specimens, and highly amusing ones, of Mr. Gilbert's wit and humour. The *Bab Ballads*—one of the most admirable things written since Thackeray's *Ballads of Policeman X.*—would themselves supply material in profusion; and so would the volume of plays which Mr. Gilbert published in 1876, and which includes such works as *The Wicked World*, *The Palace of Truth*, &c. There are some very entertaining things in *The Sorcerer*,—

notably the patter-song allotted to the Sorcerer himself, Mr. J. W. Wells. See also some of the songs and choruses in *H.M.S. Pinafore*,—especially the First Lord of the Admiralty's song, which may be said to be a fitting pendant to that of the Judge just quoted. The First Lord is represented as saying:

When I was a lad I served a term
As office-boy to an attorney's firm;
I cleaned the windows and I swept the floor,
And I polished up the handle of the big front door.
I polished up that handle so carefullee,
That now I am the ruler of the Queen's Navee.

Chorus.

He polished up the handle, &c.

In serving writs I made such a name
That an articled clerk I soon became;
I wore clean collars and a brand-new suit
For the pass examination at the Institute.
And that pass examination did so well for me,
That now I am the ruler of the Queen's Navee.

Chorus.

And that pass examination, &c.

Of legal knowledge I acquired such a grip
That they took me into the partnership;
And that junior partnership, I ween,
Was the only ship that I ever had seen.
But that kind of ship so suited me,
That now I am the ruler of the Queen's Navee.

Chorus.

But that kind of ship, &c.

I grew so rich that I was sent
By a pocket borough into Parliament.
I always voted at my party's call,
And I never thought of thinking for myself at all.

I thought so little, they rewarded me
By making me the ruler of the Queen's Navee.

Chorus.

He thought so little, &c.

Now, landsmen all, whoever you may be,
If you want to rise to the top of the tree,
If your soul isn't fettered by an office-stool,
Be careful to be guided by this golden rule—
Stick close to your desks and never go to sea,
And you all may be rulers of the Queen's Navee.

Chorus.

Stick close to your desks, &c.

When all is said and done, however, it will perhaps be found that in *Trial by Jury* is to be seen the best of Mr. Gilbert's witty and humorous productions in the way of verse.

Mr. Frank Burnand has written many burlesques since his *Poll and Partner Joe* was first produced; but it is doubtful if he has ever written anything at once so popular and so likely to be lasting as the famous ditty which occurs in that extravaganza, and which relates how true William Kidd was, under every circumstance, to Poll:

His heart was true to Poll,
His heart was true to Poll.
It's no matter what you do
If your heart be only true:
And his heart *was* true to Poll.

This is the chorus of the song, which, in the 'authorised version' consists of three verses, and runs as follows:

I'll sing you a song, not very long,
But the story somewhat new,
Of William Kidd, who, whatever he did,
To his Poll was always true.
He sailed away in a galliant ship
From the port of old Bris*tol*,
And the last words he uttered,
As his hankercher he fluttered,
Were, 'My heart is true to Poll.'

'Twas a wreck. Willi*am*, on shore he swam,
And looked about for an inn;
When a noble savage lady, of a colour rather shady,
Came up with a kind of grin:
'Oh, marry *me*, and a king you'll be,
And in a palace loll;
Or we'll eat you willy-nilly.'
So he gave his *hand*, did Billy,
But his *heart* was true to Poll.

Away a twelvemonth sped, and a happy life he led
As the King of the Kikeryboos;
His paint was red and yellar, and he used a big umbrella,
And he wore a pair of over-*shoes*;
He'd corals and knives, and twenty-six wives,
Whose beauties I cannot here extol:
One day they all revolted,
So he back to Bristol bolted,
For his *heart* was true to Poll.

This ranks among the few truly comic songs in the language, and is altogether superior to the 'Song of Sixpence,' contributed to *Punch*, by which it was first suggested. The 'Songs of Sixpence,' of which it formed an item, were entirely the composition of Mr. Burnand, and were at one time a leading feature of the periodical in which they appeared. Since then Mr. Burnand's dramatic productions have been legion; but 'True to Poll' still represents the high-water mark to which the stream of his humorous fancy has attained in verse.

Mr. Reece will best be represented by an extract from a piece which swarms with puns—a commodity in which Mr. Reece deals, in his burlesques, as largely as does Mr. Byron. Take, as a specimen of his work, these lines, supposed to be addressed by a rejected tutor to the object of his hopeless love:

I love you! Ay, it seems absurd,
Although to prove it I was sedulous;
The *ink* is *black* that writes the word,
Yet you will read it all *inc-red*-ulous.

Where was my sense once so acute
  To dream myself a hopeful suitor?
I should have been much more *astute:*
  I came to you, you know, *as tutor!*

My passion on an instant grew—
  (Spontaneous love is scarce a crime!)
How swift those early minutes flew;
  And, *odd* to say, 'twas *even*-time.

At tea you took my heart by storm;
  And now, whene'er the leaf I view,
I find—to use a Latin form—
  Tea the accusative of '*tu!*'

Maddened with love, I penned a note,
  And placed it where 'twould catch your sight;
Alas for me! but when I *wrote,*
  Of course I thought that I *did right!*

Tutors' reward is like the ape's,
  Few ha'pence pay him for his tricks;
And *my* poor fate *no* grief escapes—
  Whatever *happens,* I get *kicks.*

I got them there! kind Time has lent
  Some balm; but still the thought is sore.
It was indeed a punishment
  I know I never felt *before.**

Joined together in so many theatrical enterprises, Messrs. Reece and Farnie shall not in this instance be divided. Both use the same sort of weapons, and win the same sort of victories in the dramatic world. Perhaps the most permanently interesting of Mr. Farnie's performances is the burlesque of *Nemesis,* in which there occurs (to name nothing else) that exceedingly edifying ditty called 'The Language of Love.'

It may be convenient to include here among the comic dramatists Mr. H. S. Leigh and Mr. Savile Clarke, though

* From *Comic Poets of the Nineteenth Century.*

these gentlemen have confined themselves almost wholly to the adaptation of French pieces to the English stage. Both are known, however, as occasional verse-writers of much fluency and piquancy. Mr. Leigh has published several volumes, and may be regarded as *par excellence* the Laureate of Cockayne. His *Carols* overflow with hearty fun, exhibiting, indeed, quite an *embarras des richesses* in the way of comic melody. His parodies, especially, are very happy. Note, for example, this, called 'Only Seven,' a pastoral story after Wordsworth:

I marvelled why a simple child,
  That lightly draws its breath,
Should utter groans so very wild,
  And look as pale as death.

Adopting a parental tone,
  I asked her why she cried;
The damsel answered with a groan,
  'I've got a pain inside!

'I thought it would have sent me mad
  Last night about eleven.'
Said I, 'What is it makes you bad?
How many apples have you had?'
  She answer'd, 'Only seven!'

'And are you sure you took no more,
  My little maid?' quoth I;
'Oh, please, sir, mother gave me four,
  But *they* were in a pie!'

'If that's the case,' I stammer'd out,
  'Of course you've had eleven.'
The maiden answer'd with a pout,
  'I ain't had more nor seven!'

I wonder'd hugely what she meant,
  And said, 'I'm bad at riddles;
But I know where little girls are sent
  For telling taradiddles

'Now, if you won't reform,' said I,
You'll never go heaven.'
But all in vain; each time I try,
That little idiot makes reply,
'I ain't had more nor seven!'

Of Mr. Clarke's light and easy style the following verses are a favourable specimen. They are called 'A Billiard Lesson:'

'Twas pleasant, on the winter nights,
To see beneath the shaded lights
Her classic head bent low;
And watch her snowy fingers make
A clever stroke, and count each 'break'
Of such a gentle foe.

And though she said it was a sin
To beat her, I could always win
To bear such pretty blame;
While, 'mid the winning strokes I made,
It seem'd to me as if I played
A very losing game.

There's *kudos* in the rattling strokes
You make amid the fire of jokes
From chaffing fellow-men;
And yet when beauty turns away,
And pouts at your superior play,
You've other feelings then.

No 'hazard' that my cunning cue,
With all my greatest care, could do,
Or lucky 'fluke' might get,
Could ever equal that I ran
In playing—miserable man!—
With such a flirting pet.

And though I lost such heaps of gloves
In betting with her,—when one loves,
Such losing bets are blest;

And since she teased me night and day,
I only got at billiard-play
The chances of a 'rest.'

The 'cannon' on the table green
Will to a Canon come, I ween,
Who'll tie me to a wife;
And she, with backers not a few,
Will quietly put on the 'screw,'
And 'pocket' me for life.

The list of occasional writers includes not only playwrights like those quoted from, but journalists *par excellence*, like Mr. Ashby Sterry, Mr. William Sawyer, Mr. Edmund Yates, and Mr. G. J. Cayley. Mr. Ashby Sterry is well known as the author of a book of *Boudoir Ballads*, in which the various characteristics of the fair sex are hit off with agreeable fluency and *verve*. The volume contains, besides, some half a dozen miscellaneous pieces, of which the subjoined trifle—'A Nutshell Novel, for a Miniature Mudie'—is a good example:

VOL. I.

A winning wile,
A sunny smile,
A feather:
A tiny walk,
A pleasant talk,
Together!

VOL. II.

A little doubt,
A playful pout,
Capricious;
A merry miss,
A stolen kiss,
Delicious!

VOL. III.

You ask mamma,
Consult papa,
With pleasure;

And both repent
This rash event
At leisure!

This is emphatically a *jeu d'esprit*, and displays its author's lightness and brightness of touch as well, perhaps, as any longer extract.

Mr. Sawyer has published two or three volumes of serious verse, marked by much delicacy of thought and grace of expression. His comic poetry has, we believe, been entirely confined to periodicals, and is of a particularly excellent description. Mr. Sawyer is especially successful in burlesque. Hamlet's famous soliloquy has often been travestied, but rarely so agreeably as by Mr. Sawyer:

To urn, or not to urn? that is the question.
Whether 'tis nobler for our frames to suffer
The shows and follies of outrageous custom,
Or to take fire—against a sea of zealots—
And by consuming, end them? To urn—to keep—
No more: and while we keep, to say we end
Contagion and the thousand graveyard ills
That flesh is heir to—'tis a consume-ation
Devoutly to be wished! To burn—to keep—
To keep! Perchance to lose—ay, there's the rub;
For in the course of things what duns may come,
Or who may shuffle off our Dresden urn,
Must give us pause. There's the respect
That makes inter-i-ment of so long use.
For who would have the pall and plumes of hire,
The tradesman's prize—a proud man's obsequies,
The chaffering for graves, the legal fee,
The cemetery beadle and the rest,
When he himself might his few ashes make
With a mere furnace? Who would tombstones bear,
And lie beneath a lying epitaph,
But that the dread of simmering after death—
That uncongenial furnace from whose burn
No incremator returns—weakens the will,
And makes us rather bear the graves we have

Than fly to ovens that we know not of?
This, Thomson, does make cowards of us all.
And thus the wisdom of incineration
Is thick-laid o'er with the pale ghost of nought,
And incremators of great pith and courage,
With this regard, their faces turn away,
And shudder at cremation.

Mr. Yates's efforts in the way of verse have, of late years, been unfortunately few and far between. He has, however, had time to produce at least one epigram, 'All Saints,' which will live longer than much of the same sort of thing:

In a church which is furnish'd with mullion and gable,
With altar and reredos, with gargoyle and groin,
The penitents' dresses are sealskin and sable,
The odour of sanctity's Eau-de-Cologne.

But only could Lucifer, flying from Hades,
Gaze down on this crowd with its paniers and paints,
He would say, as he look'd at the lords and the ladies,
'Oh, where is All Sinners if this is All Saints'?'

His society verse is marked by much fluency and point and pathos.

Of Mr. Cayley's verse-production we can find room for no more than another epigram, in the form of a mock epitaph 'On a Young Lady:'

A lovely young lady I mourn in my rhymes:
She was pleasant, good-natured, and civil sometimes;
Her figure was good—she had very fine eyes,
And her talk was a mixture of foolish and wise.
Her adorers were many, and one of them said,
'She waltzed rather well! It's a pity she's dead!'

For others of his *jeux d'esprit*, see his very agreeable *Bridle Roads of Spain*.

Space must now be given to the living writers of mere nonsense—of nonsense, that is, that is really good. Nor can any commodity be named of which the supply is smaller, at this time or at any other. Good sense we can obtain

from many quarters; good nonsense seems to be the exclusive productions of writers who, like Messrs. Carroll, Lear, and Pennell, are not ashamed to devote themselves almost exclusively to its manufacture. Of these, the gentleman who still prefers to call himself by the name of Carroll is unquestionably the ablest, his work in this direction amounting, we may say, to absolute genius. His volume of *Phantasmagoria* contains many of his comic efforts; but his happiest work is to be found within the covers of *Alice's Adventures* or of *Through the Looking-glass*. It is from the latter that we extract the now famous ballad of *Jabberwocky*, which may be taken either as a piece of pure comicality without meaning whatsoever, or as a *reductio ad absurdum* of the unintelligible 'poetry' of the day. Regarded in either light it is a miracle of ingenuity:

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.

'Beware the Jabberwock, my son!
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!
Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun
The frumious Bandersnatch!'

He took his vorpal sword in hand:
Long time the manxome foe he sought—
So rested he by the tumtum tree,
And stood awhile in thought.

And, as in uffish thought he stood,
And Jabberwock, with eyes of flame,
Came whiffling through the tulgey wood,
And burbled as it came,

One, two! One, two! And through and through
The vorpal blade went snicker-snack!
He left it dead, and with its head
He went galumphing back.

'And hast thou slain the Jabberwock?
Come to my arms, my beamish boy!
O frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!'
He chortled in his joy.

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.*

Quite of a piece with this is the hardly less successful ballad of 'The Walrus and the Carpenter,' which we would name as the best possible subject that could be chosen as the test of any person's humorous capacity. If this did not excite his risible faculties, then he would be in a bad way. It is not only the comicality of certain verses:

The sun was shining on the sea,
Shining with all his might;
He did his very best to make
The billows smooth and bright;
And this was odd, because it was
The middle of the night. . . .

* There are some lines by Mr. W. S. Gilbert which are not so famous as *Jabberwocky*, but which display much of the same sort of peculiar cleverness. Here are two of the verses:

Sing for the garish eye,
When moonless brandings cling!
Let the froddering crooner cry,
And the braddled sapster sing.
For never, and never again,
Will the tottering beechlings play,
For bratticed wrackers are singing aloud,
And the throngers croon in May!

The wracking globe unstrung,
Unstrung in the frittering light
Of a moon that knows no day,
Of a day that knows no night!
Diving away in the crowd
Of sparkling frets in spray,
The bratticed wrackers are singing aloud,
And the throngers croon in May!

The sea was wet as wet could be,
  The sands were dry as dry;
You could not see a cloud, because
  No cloud was in the sky:
No birds were flying overhead—
  There were no birds to fly.

The whole motive of the ballad is humorous to the core: the incongruity of detail is exquisite in the extreme—so mathematically perfect in proportions:

The Walrus and the Carpenter
  Were walking close at hand;
They wept like anything to see
  Such quantities of sand:
'If this were only cleared away,'
  They said, 'it would be grand!'

'If seven maids, with seven mops,
  Swept it for half a year,
Do you suppose,' the Walrus said,
  'That they could get it clear?'
'I doubt it,' said the Carpenter,
  And shed a bitter tear.

Mr. Carroll is also very great in parody, his contributions in the way of which rank among the most perfect of their kind. Specially good is his travestie of Southey's 'Father William:'

'You are old,' said the youth, 'and your jaws are too weak
  For anything tougher than suet;
Yet you finished the goose, with the bones and the beak—
  Pray how did you manage to do it?'

'In my youth,' said his father, 'I took to the law,
  And argued each case with my wife;
And the muscular strength which it gave to my jaw
  Has lasted the rest of my life.'

Attention may be directed, too, to his burlesque of a favourite Swinburnian metre in his 'Atalanta in Camden Town.'

Mr. Lear has written more than Mr. Carroll, but not more successfully. Like Shadwell, though in a very different sense, he is 'through all the realms of nonsense absolute.' His nonsense verses, intended, we believe, primarily for children, are so truly droll that they are capable of giving the greatest possible pleasure to all who can appreciate the ludicrous.

We have already referred, more than once, to what we have called the poetry of surprise. Here is another instance of it from the pen of Mr. Cholmondeley Pennell. He is describing the humours of a village feast:

Alone amid the festive throng
  One infant brow is sad;
One cherub face is wet with grief—
  What ails you, little lad?

Why still with scarifying sleeve
  That woful visage scrub?
Ah, much I fear, my gentle boy,
  You don't enjoy your grub.

It's clear you're sadly off your feed;
  Your laughing looks have fled;
Perhaps some faithful little friend
  Has punched your little head?

You miss some well-remembered face
  The merry rout among?
The lips that blest, the arms that prest,
  The neck to which you clung?—
A brother's voice? a sister's smile?—
  Perhaps—you've burnt your tongue?

Here, on a sympathetic breast,
  Your tale of suffering pour.
Come, darling, tell me all—'*Boo-boo!*—
  I can't eat any more!'

Like Mr. Carroll, and so many other living authors, Mr. Pennell is an adept at travestie, and has written very clever parodies on Longfellow's 'Excelsior' and Southey's 'How the Waters go down at Lodore.' The latter is, in its way, as

great a *tour de force* as the original, and we are fain to give it in its entirety. It may be compared, for easy volubility, with the poem by Mr. Planché, quoted by us a few pages back:

How do the daughters
Come down at Dunoon?
Daintily
Tenderly
Fairily
Gingerly
Glidingly
Slidingly
Slippingly
Skippingly
Trippingly
Chippingly
Bumpingly
Thumpingly
Stumpingly
Clumpingly,
Starting and bolting,
And darting and jolting,
And tottering and staggering,
And lumbering and slithering,
And hurrying and scurrying,
And worrying and flurrying,
And rushing and leaping and crushing and creeping;
Feathers a-flying all—bonnets untying all—
Petticoats rapping and flapping and slapping all,
Crinolines flowing and blowing and showing all,
Balmorals, dancing and glancing, entrancing all;
Feats of activity—
Nymphs on declivity—
Mothers in extasies—
Fathers in vextasies—
Lady-loves whisking and frisking and clinging on,
True-lovers puffing and blowing and springing on,
Dashing and clashing and shying and flying on,
Blushing and flushing and wriggling and giggling on,

Teasing and pleasing and squeezing and wheezing on,
Everlastingly falling and bawling and sprawling on,
Tumbling and rumbling and grumbling and stumbling on,
Any fine afternoon
About July or June—
That's just how the daughters
Come down to Dunoon!

It would be unfair to omit from the list of writers of good nonsense the name of Mr. Walter Parke, the author of a volume of *Songs of Singularity*, in which much ingenuity and humour are displayed. The work is full of variety. At one time we have a string of stanzas like these:

There was an old waiter at Wapping
Drew corks for a week without stopping;
Cried he, 'It's too bad!
The practice I've had,
Yet cannot prevent them from popping!'

There was an old priest in Peru
Who dreamt he converted a Jew.
He woke in the night
In a deuce of a fright,
And found it was perfectly true.

There was an old witch of Malacca,
Who smoked such atrocious tob*acca*,
When tigers came near
They trembled with fear,
And didn't attempt to att*acca*.

At another time we have a 'Chaucerian fragment' on 'Ye Clerke of ye Wethere;' at another, a story of a young gazelle—a 'Moore-ish tale'—both very clever. Then we have 'An Idyl,' beginning:

He stood on his head on the wild sea-shore,
And joy was the cause of the act,
For he felt as he never had felt before—
Insanely glad, in fact.

And why? In that vessel that left the bay
His mother-in-law had sailed
To a tropical country far away,
Where tigers and snakes prevailed.

And elsewhere there is what is, perhaps, the best thing in the book—a piece entitled 'A Vague Story:'

Perchance it was her eyes of blue,
Her cheeks that might the rose have shamed,
Her figure in proportion true
To all the rules by artists framed;
Perhaps it was her mental worth
That made her lover love her so;
Perhaps her name, or wealth, or birth—
I cannot tell—I do not know.

He may have had a rival, who
Did fiercely gage him to a duel,
And, being luckier of the two,
Defeated him with triumph cruel;
Then *she* may have proved false, and turned
To welcome to her arms his foe,
Left *him* despairing, conquered, spurned—
I cannot tell—I do not know.

So oft such woes will counteract
The thousand ecstasies of love,
That you may fix on base of fact
The story hinted at above;
But all on earth so doubtful is,
Man knows so little here below,
That, if you ask for proof of this,
I cannot tell—I do not know.

For the humorous poetry of Mr. Matthew Browne the reader must turn to the appropriately small volume of *Lilliput Levée*, in which are included some charmingly playful poems of child-life. The description of Lilliput Land itself has always seemed to us one of the happiest performances of the kind; the fancy exhibited is so truly comic, and withal so thoroughly natural and in keeping:

Where does Pinafore Palace stand?
Right in the middle of Lilliput Land.
There the queen eats bread and honey;
There the king counts up his money.

O, the glorious Revolution!
O, the Provisional Constitution!
Now that the children, clever bold folks,
Have turned the tables upon the old folks.

Easily the thing was done,
For the children were more than two to one;
Brave as lions, quick as foxes,
With hoards of wealth in their money-boxes.

They seized the keys, they patrolled the street,
They drove the policeman off his beat,
They built barricades, they stationed sentries—
You must give the word when you come to the entries.

They dressed themselves in riflemen's clothes,
They had pea-shooters, they had arrows and bows,
So as to put resistance down:
Order reigns in Lilliput town.

They made the baker bake hot rolls,
They made the wharfinger send in coals,
They made the butcher kill the calf,
They cut the telegraph wires in half.

They went to the chemist's, and with their feet
They kicked the physic all down the street;
They went to the schoolroom and tore the books,
They munched the puffs at the pastry-cook's.

They sucked the jam, they lost the spoons,
They sent up several fire-balloons,
They let off crackers, they burnt a guy,
They piled a bonfire ever so high.

They offered a prize for the laziest boy,
And one for the most magnificent toy,
They split or burnt the canes off-hand,
They made new laws in Lilliput Land.

Never do to-day what you can
Put off till to-morrow, one of them ran;
Late to bed and late to rise,
Was another law which they did devise

They made the old folks come to school
All in pinafores—that was the rule;
Saying, *Eeener, deener, diner, duss,*
Kattler, wheeler, whiler, wuss.

They made them learn all sorts of things
That nobody liked. They had catechisings;
They kept them in, they sent them down
In class, in school in Lilliput town.

O, but they gave them tit for tat;
Thick bread-and-butter, and all that;
Stick-jaw pudding that tires your chin,
With the marmalade spread ever so thin.

They never waited for king or for cat;
They never wiped their shoes on the mat;
Their joy was great; their joy was greater;
They rode in the baby's perambulator.

The unforced gaiety of these lines makes them peculiarly agreeable, and will always keep them popular.

It is of the nature of political squibs that they are for the occasion, not, like Shakespeare, 'for all time.' We will not therefore quote from the clever songs and ballads which have appeared of recent years in the *Pall Mall Gazette*—at least, we will not quote from those which were devoted to matters of temporary interest. More permanent in character, and certainly not less amusing, are such verses as those called 'A Didactic Ode,' devoted to a terse description of the views of certain modern thinkers. For example:

'Development' is all the go, of course, with Herbert Spencer,
Who cares a little more than Comte about the 'why' and 'whence,' sir.
Appearances, he seems to think, do not exhaust totality,
But indicate that underneath there's some 'Unknown Reality.'

And Darwin, too, who leads the throng *in vulgum voces spargere*,
Maintains Humanity is naught except a big menagerie,
The progeny of tailless apes, sharp-eared but puggy-nosed, sir,
Who nightly climbed their 'family trees' and on the top reposed, sir.

There's Carlyle, on the other hand, whose first and last concern it is
To preach up the 'immensities' and muse on the 'eternities;'
But if one credits what one hears, the gist of all his brag is, sir,
That 'Erbwürst,' rightly understood, is transcendental 'Haggis,' sir.

To Matthew Arnold we must go, to put us in the right, sir,
About his elevating scheme of 'sweetness' and of 'light,' sir,
Which some folks say will one fine day achieve a marked ascendency,
Though 'Providence' it waters down into 'a stream of tendency.'

The annals of our native land were lapsed in doubt and mystery,
Till Mr. Freeman t'other day discovered English history,
And now admonishes the world it is his fixed intention
To make it a monopoly and patent the invention. . . .

Professor Huxley has essayed to bridge across the chasm, sir,
'Twixt matter dead and matter quick by means of 'protoplasm,' sir,
And to his doctrine now subjoins the further 'grand attraction'
That 'consciousness' in man and brute is simply reflex action. . . .

Here the characterisation is as clever as the wit is pungent, and the result makes us regret that such writing is not

commoner nowadays. It is frequently attempted, but is too often spoiled by its unfortunate accompaniment—intellectual brutality.

Such verse, to be entirely effective, should essentially be marked as much by 'sweetness' as by 'light.' It should be playful rather than biting, lambent rather than mordant. The weapon used should be the rapier, not the sabre. This truth has been recognised by Mr. Calverley, and the consequence is that his two little volumes contain some of the most perfect specimens of pure persiflage obtainable. He is, indeed, the Apostle of Persiflage, as Mr. Byron of Fun, and Mr. Gilbert of Cynicism. His mission is to poke fun at everything, and he does so—doing it so inimitably that it is a matter for surprise that his publications are not more popular than they are. It may be said of him that he touches no subject that he does not adorn. He has essayed almost every variety of comic verse, and has done well in all. Take parody, for example. To travestie a special writer or a particular piece seems to Mr. Calverley the easiest thing possible. At one time it is the Laureate whom he burlesques:

I loiter down by thorp and town;
  For any job I'm willing;
Take here and there a dusty brown,
  And here and there a shilling.

I deal in every ware in turn,
  I've rings for buddin' Sally
That sparkle like those eyes of her'n;
  I've liquor for the valet.

I steal from th' parson's strawberry plots,
  I hide by th' squire's covers;
I teach the sweet young housemaids what's
  The art of trapping lovers.

At another it is Mr. Browning:

I did once hitch the syntax into verse:
Verbum personale, a verb personal,
Concordat—ay, 'agrees,' old Fatchaps—*cum*

Nominativo—with its nominative,
Genere, i' point o' gender, *numero*,
O' number, *et persona*, and person. *Ut*,
Instance: *Sol ruit*, down flops sun, *et*, and,
Montes umbrantur, out flounce mountains. Pah!
Excuse me, sir, I think I'm going mad.
You see the trick on't, though, and can yourself
Continue the discourse *ad libitum*.

At another, Miss Ingelow:

In moss-prankt dells which the sunbeams flatter
(And heaven it knoweth what that may mean;
Meaning, however, is no great matter),
Where woods are a-tremble, with rifts atween;

Thro' God's own heather we wonn'd together,
I and my Willie (O love, my love):
I need hardly remark it was glorious weather,
And flitterbats waver'd alow, above.

Boats were curtseying, rising, bowing
(Boats in that climate are so polite),
And sands were a ribbon of green endowing,
And O, the sundazzle on bark and bight!

At another, it is Byron; at another, Moore; and always with the same felicity—the same inimitable ease and effect. Sometimes the humour is that of mere 'surprise:'

Kate, if e'er thy light foot lingers
On the lawn, when up the fells
Steals the Dark, and fairy fingers
Close unseen the pimpernels:
When, his thighs with sweetness laden,
From the meadows comes the bee,
And the lover and the maiden
Stand beneath the trysting tree; . . .

And the screech-owl scares the peasant,
As he skirts some churchyard drear;
And the goblins whisper pleasant
Tales in Miss Rossetti's ear;

Importuning her in strangest
  Sweetest tones to buy their fruits:
O, be careful that thou changest,
  On returning home, thy boots.

Sometimes it consists in mock-heroic treatment of a familiar subject, as in this description of a 'gallant guild, taking their annual holiday:'

Kerchief in hand I saw them stand;
  In every kerchief burk'd a lunch:
When they unfurl'd them it was grand
  To watch bronzed men and maidens crunch
The sounding celery-stick, or ram
The knife into the blushing ham.

Dash'd the bold fork through pies of pork;
  O'er hard-boil'd eggs the saltspoon shook;
Leapt from its lair the playful cork:
  Yet some there were, to whom the brook
Seem'd sweetest beverage, and for meat
They chose the red root of the beet.

At other times it is in a pretended solemnity of tone in treating of intrinsically comic matters:

I used to roam o'er glen and glade,
  Buoyant and blithe as other folk:
And not unfrequently I made
    A joke.

A minstrel's fire within me burn'd,
  I'd sing, as one whose heart must break,
Lay upon lay: I nearly learn'd
    To shake.

All day I sang; of love, of fame,
  Of fights our fathers fought of yore,
Until the thing almost became
    A bore.

I cannot sing the old songs now!
It is not that I deem them low;
'Tis that I can't remember how
They go.

I could not range the hills till high
Above me stood the summer moon:
And as to dancing, I could fly
As soon.

Again, in exactly the same vein:

Friend, there be they on whom mishap
Or never or so rarely comes,
That, when they think thereof, they snap
Derisive thumbs.

And there be they who lightly lose
Their all, yet feel no aching void;
Should aught annoy them, they refuse
To be annoy'd.

And fain would I be e'en as these!
Life is with such all beer and skittles;
They are not difficult to please
About their victuals.

The trout, the grouse, the early pea,
By such, if there, are freely taken;
If not, they munch with equal glee
Their bit of bacon.

Now we have from Mr. Calverley an amusing exercise in rhyme; now a satire upon interested 'love;' now a sly quiz upon the mental peculiarities typified in the use of the word 'forever:'

Forever; 'tis a single word!
Our rude forefathers deem'd it two:
Can you imagine so absurd
A view? . . .

And never more must printer do
As men did long ago; but run
'For' into 'ever,' bidding two
Be one.

Forever! passion-fraught, it throws
O'er the dim page a gloom, a glamour:
It's sweet, it's strange; and I suppose
It's grammar.

It is impossible, however, to give any adequate conception of the great variety there is in Mr. Calverley's fun. No English writer, since Lord Byron, has had in him so much of the spirit of the true persifleur; and he forms a fitting conclusion to the long list of wits and humourists in whose company we have lingered in this volume.

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